Wii

STAR WARS: THE FORCE UNLEASHED REVEALED

20th ANNIVERSARY

NINTENDO POWER
1988 – 2008

NINTENDO POWER

SUPER SMASH BROS. BRAWL

ADVANCE WARS: DAYS OF RUIN

ALONE IN THE DARK

ASSASSIN'S CREED

OKAMI

WORLD EXCLUSIVE!

SONIC RPG

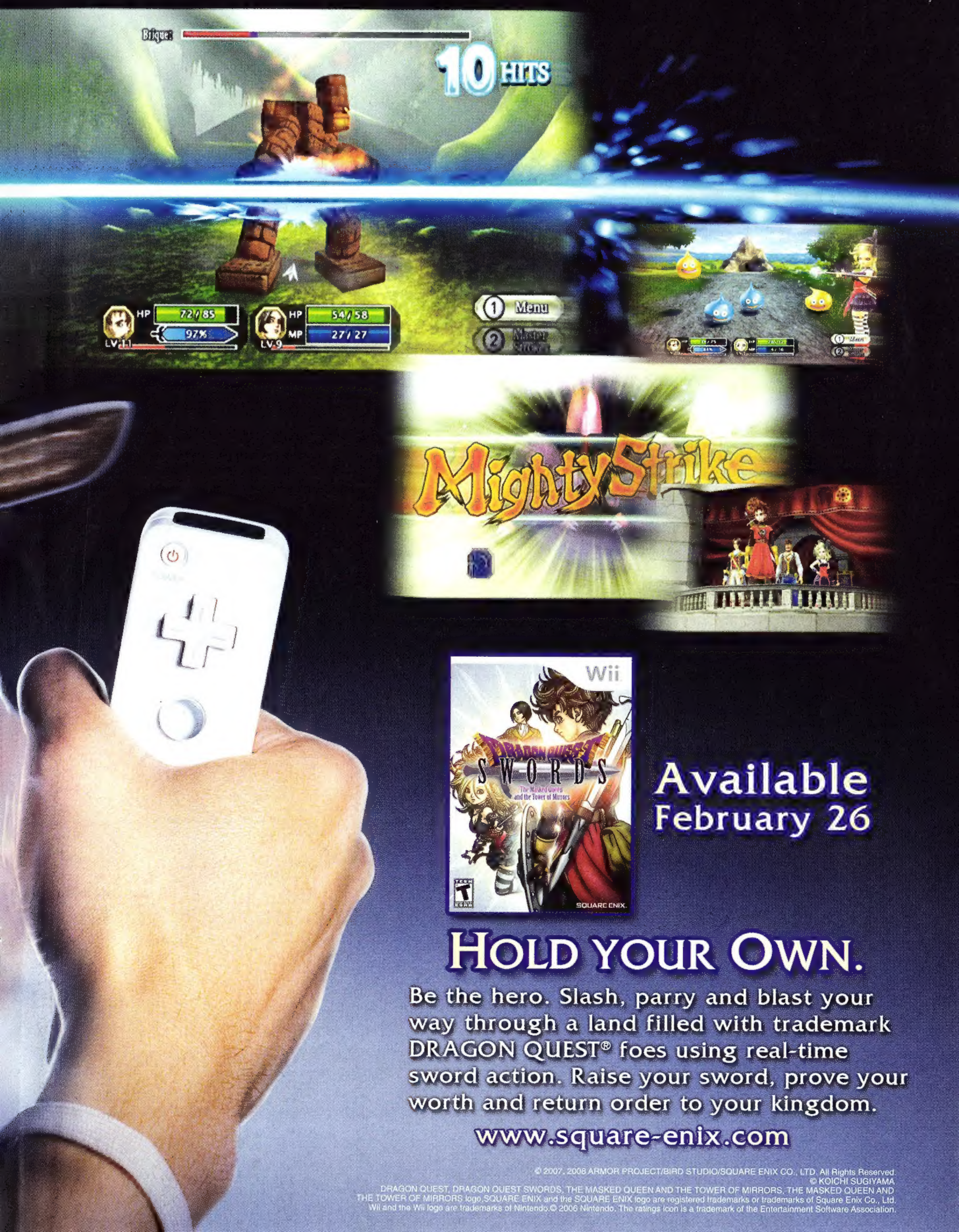
7 PAGES OF SCREENS & INFO FOR BIOWARE'S SONIC CHRONICLES: THE DARK BROTHERHOOD

SUPER MARIO GALAXY: INSIDER STORIES FROM THE DIRECTOR

SQUARE ENIX'S THE WORLD ENDS WITH YOU

FEBRUARY 2008/V225

NEW ERA. NEW SWORD.
DRAGON QUEST
SWORDS®
The Masked Queen and the Tower of Mirrors
TEEN
T
Fantasy Violence
Mild Suggestive Themes
Use of Alcohol
ESRB CONTENT RATING
www.esrb.org
Wii
SQUARE ENIX.


Brique
10 HITS
HP 72/85
97%
LV 11
HP 54/58
MP 27/27
LV 9
① Menu
② Master Strokes
Mighty Strike
Wii
DRAGON QUEST SWORDS
The Masked Queen and the Tower of Mirrors
T
SQUARE ENIX

Available
February 26

HOLD YOUR OWN.

Be the hero. Slash, parry and blast your way through a land filled with trademark DRAGON QUEST® foes using real-time sword action. Raise your sword, prove your worth and return order to your kingdom.

www.square-enix.com

© 2007, 2008 ARMOR PROJECT/BIRD STUDIO/SQUARE ENIX CO., LTD. All Rights Reserved.
© KOICHI SUGIYAMA
DRAGON QUEST, DRAGON QUEST SWORDS, THE MASKED QUEEN AND THE TOWER OF MIRRORS, THE MASKED QUEEN AND THE TOWER OF MIRRORS logo, SQUARE ENIX and the SQUARE ENIX logo are registered trademarks or trademarks of Square Enix Co., Ltd.
Wii and the Wii logo are trademarks of Nintendo. © 2006 Nintendo. The ratings icon is a trademark of the Entertainment Software Association.

im in ur magazeen

showin u the gamesradar

games
radar.

gamesradar.com for all your gaming news, previews,
reviews, videos, features, babes etc...

NINTENDO POWER

CONTENTS • FEBRUARY 2008

FEATURES

36 Ready to Role
Sonic...RPG...BioWare...DS. You can stop pinching yourself, the game really does exist—we've seen it! Prepare your eyeballs for a heaping helping of Sonic Chronicles: The Dark Brotherhood.

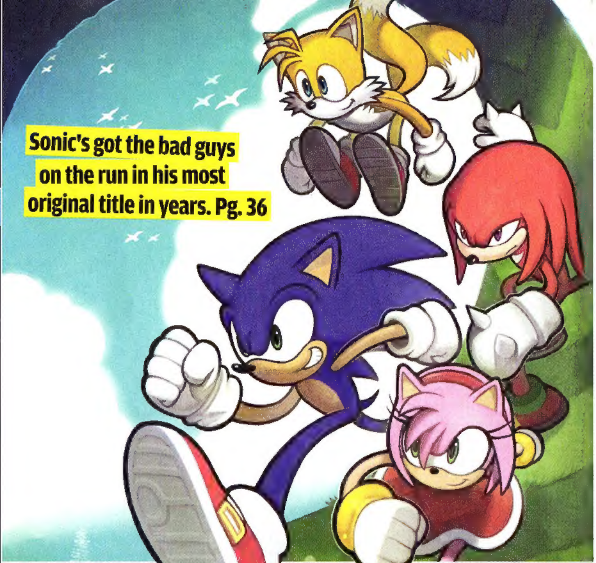
46 Welcome to the Dark Side
The Alone in the Dark series is back to scare up some fun on Wii. Bring a flashlight—or a flaming chair will do.

50 Wild at Art
Feast your eyes on some of the most gorgeous video game artwork ever created, and chat with the team behind the Wii version of the amazing Okami.

56 Lost in Translation
While North America gets most of the world's coolest games, a few never make it to our shores. Here are 12 titles that we hope one day will.

62 Magic Moments
Game director Yoshiaki Koizumi reveals how our favorite parts of Super Mario Galaxy came to be.

70 Path of the Assassin
The blockbuster series Assassin's Creed explodes onto DS with a totally new prequel to the original chart-topping title.



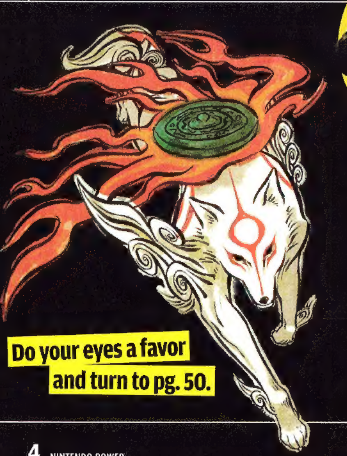
Sonic's got the bad guys on the run in his most original title in years. Pg. 36

36
Get your first look at Sonic Chronicles: The Dark Brotherhood!

70
The smash-hit Assassin's Creed is reborn on DS.

46
Alone in the Dark, the *original* survival-horror series, returns on Wii.

62
The director of Super Mario Galaxy shares the stories behind our 10 favorite moments.

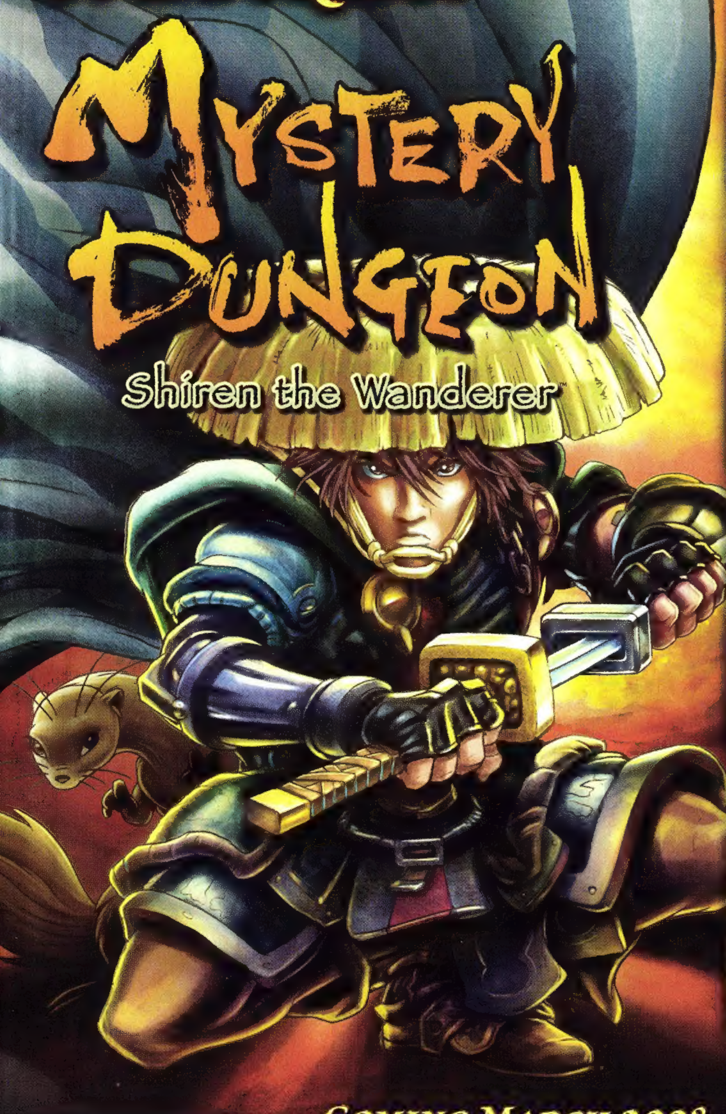


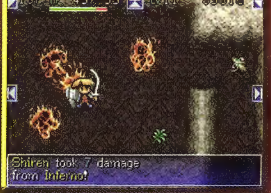
Do your eyes a favor and turn to pg. 50.

CAN YOU SURVIVE THE DUNGEONS OF El DORADO?

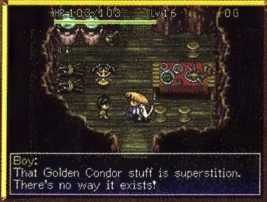
MYSTERY DUNGEON

Shiren the Wanderer™

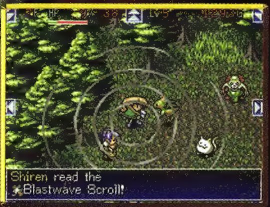



Shiren took 7 damage from Inferno!

Randomly generated dungeons crawl with over 180 unique monsters to defeat


Boy:
That Golden Condor stuff is superstition. There's no way it exists!

Delve into engaging Quests and unravel the mystery of the Golden Condor


Shiren read the Blastwave Scroll!

Cast earth-shattering spells, even transform into different Beasts

Discover new items and weapons in epic environments

COMING MARCH 2008

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Mild Fantasy Violence

Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection

NINTENDO DS™

CHUN SOFT

SEGA®
www.sega.com

SEGA is registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. SEGA and the SEGA logo are registered trademarks of SEGA Corporation. © SEGA. All rights reserved. Mystery Dungeon: Shiren the Wanderer is either a registered trademark or trademark of CHUNSOFT Co., Ltd. Nintendo DS is a trademark of Nintendo. © 2006 Nintendo.

Super Smash Bros. Brawl gets even hotter on pg. 23!

NINTENDO POWER

CONTENTS

22
THE FORCE IS UNLEASHED; BROTHERS START SMASHING; SEGA SERVES SUPERSTARS; APOLLO IS ACE; THE DEAD RETURN; DINOS SHOW THEIR MIGHT; DODGEBALL IS SUPER; THE FUNGI RISE; BRAINS GET A BOOST; THE FOREST GETS SAVED; DUNGEONS GET EXPLORED; AND MORE

PREVIEW FEBRUARY 08

DEPARTMENTS

10 **Pulse**

14 **News**
Play some sports, put up your dukes, fly a mini-copter, build your own bug 'bots, and more in this month's News.

20 **Wii Channels**

22 **Previews**

74 **20 Years of Nintendo Power**

76 **Sweepstakes**
Win a Wii and Endless Ocean and find out why life is better down where it's wetter.

78 **Power Profiles**

82 **Playback**
Ready to kick some clay? Bad Mr. Frosty is taking on all challengers.

85 **Reviews**

94 **Community**
Who—or what—is the Etch-A-Sketchist? Plus: Four-wheelin' Donkey Kong!

96 **Next Month**

14
The World Ends With You: Square Enix's next big DS game.

78
Power Profile: Sonic and NiGHTS legend Takashi Iizuka.

87
Does Nintendo's unique Wii diving sim sink or swim?

Donkey Kong could be coming to your town this Sunday, Sunday, Sunday! pg. 95

ADVERTISEMENT

READER REVIEW

you.

GAMER OF THE WEEK

Name: Ted Krinshaw

Age: 15

Hometown: Tallahassee, Florida

PROS: InverteBOTS rocks! I recommend being the king scorpion. You got killer claws and one wicked stinger. Definitely the best attack combos.

CONS: The match-ups can get kinda unrealistic. I don't care who you are, an amped-up ant could never take a teched-out tarantula. Game over.

Tom

INVERTEBOTS

So then you sit on your couch, watching your favorite [illegible] on TV. You hear a thump, but you're too lazy to crank your head to the window to see. Your dog begins barking. You feel a thump in the ground. Your dog stops barking. Actually where is your dog? Then suddenly a stinger the size of a telephone pole comes crashing though your roof, directly into your mom's best china. You look outside to see a 60-foot robotic scorpion laying waste to your neighborhood. And all you can say is "Sweet."

Enter the InverteBOTS, the newest creation from POWERSOURCE 360. A re-evolution of Rampage, InverteBOTS's premise is simple. If you can grasp it, you can smash it. Set in the not-too-distant future, the world's machines have become modeled after the most resilient organisms on Earth: bugs. Techno-exoskeleton superbugs with the meanest of mechanical mandibles make mayhem on mankind. And you're behind the wheel. A[illegible]

Apart from your pesky opponent sitting next to you, you'll have to fend off ranks of army ants, maniacal mayflies, and one bad mother sucker, the Mosquito.

It has multi-function modes of play, from one- and two-player missions to a free-for-all bug-bashing to a head-to-head torso-twisting roughhouse.

Lifelike graphics [illegible] with just enough computer animation to let you level a city block without feeling too bad. And with independent controlling options that allow you to move each arm and leg individually, it's not all that hard, either.

King Scorpion

Super Fly

Check you out at the party last night. Not the friend I went with. We need to talk. -AJ

FIND YOUR WAY TO TELL A FRIEND

WWW.ABOVETHEINFLUENCE.COM

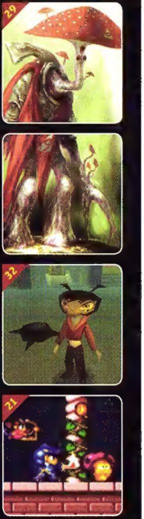
Office of National Drug Control Policy/Partnership for a Drug-Free America®

GAME INDEX

GAME TITLE	PAGE
Advance Wars: Days of Ruin (DS)	86
Alien Storm (VC)	20
Alone in the Dark (Wii)	46
Apollo Justice: Ace Attorney (DS)	25
Assassin's Creed (DS)	70
Baroque (Wii)	16
Baseball Stars 2 (VC)	20
Bomberman Land Touch! 2 (DS)	88
Brain Assist (DS)	30
Castle of Shikigami III (Wii)	16
Clay Fighter (SNES)	82
Cybernator (VC)	21
Daigasso! Band Brothers (DS)	58
Deca Sports (Wii)	15
Densetsu no Stafy 4 (DS)	59
Dinosaur King (DS)	26
Don King Presents: Prizefighter (Wii/DS)	15
Drone Tactics (DS)	17
Dungeon Explorer: Warriors of Ancient Arts (DS)	32
Dynastic Hero, The (VC)	21
Eco-Creatures: Save the Forest (DS)	30
Endless Ocean (Wii)	87
Eternal Champions (VC)	21
Freshly-Picked Tingle's Rosy Rupeeland (DS)	60
Game & Watch Collection (DS)	61
Ghosts 'n Goblins (VC)	21
The House of the Dead 2 & 3 Return (Wii)	25
Insecticide (DS)	32
Jump Super Stars (DS)	58
Jump Ultimate Stars (DS)	58
Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games (DS)	88
MiniCopter: Adventure Flight (Wii)	16
Moero! Nekketsu Rhythm Damashii Osu! Tatakae! Ouendan 2 (DS)	59
Monster Lair (VC)	21
Mother 3 (GBA)	60
Mushroom Men: Rise of the Fungi (DS)	29
Nanostray 2 (DS)	89
Nitro Bike (Wii)	89
Okami (Wii)	50
One Piece: Unlimited Adventure (Wii)	87
Osu! Tatakae! Ouendan (DS)	59
Pokémon Snap (VC)	20
Professor Layton and the Curious Village (DS)	88
Rhythm Tengoku (GBA)	60
River King: Mystic Valley (DS)	90
Robo-Revolt: Robocalypse Now (DS)	24
Sega Superstars Tennis (Wii)	24
Sonic Chronicles: The Dark Brotherhood (DS)	36
Sonic Riders: Zero Gravity (Wii)	90
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed (Wii)	22
Summer Sports (Wii)	15
Super Dodgeball Brawlers (DS)	28
Super Mario Galaxy (Wii)	62
Super Smash Bros. Brawl (Wii)	23
Tingle's Balloon Fight (DS)	61
The World Ends With You (DS)	14
WWII Aces (Wii)	28
Zanac (VC)	21
Zekkyo Senshi Sakeburein (DS)	61

16
61
21
46
70
15
36
21
23

62
50
59
22
24



DS = NINTENDO DS
SNES = SUPER NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
GBA = GAME BOY ADVANCE
VC = VIRTUAL CONSOLE
Wii = Wii

MERCURY MELTDOWN REVOLUTION

4/5
GameSpy

"If this all sounds like just the thing to keep you in thrall for hours on end, the $20 you spend on Mercury Meltdown Revolution will buy you the single best bargain currently available for the Wii."

8.5/10
GameSpot

"[Mercury Meltdown] finds a natural home on Nintendo's console, where the Wii Remote finally gives you much-needed tilt control."

ONLY $19.99

WWW.IGNITIONUSA.COM

EVERYONE
E
Visit ESRB.org for updated rating information.

IGNITION entertainment
a UTV enterprise

Wii

Pulse

Is the DS the Best System Ever?

I'm pretty particular about which titles I'll keep in my permanent collection. I force myself to weed out games that are just okay and focus not on quantity, but quality. So, by glancing at the shelves of my game cabinet I can get a quick impression of how systems compare to each other historically. This month my DS row became the longest.

To me, the most amazing thing about the DS is that it's become the place for developers to create a wide variety of game types, where the smaller development budgets haven't scared away risky innovation or grandiose game designs. Certainly, no other system would have given us Brain Age and Nintendogs, but the DS has also become a leader in epics for hardcore players with titles like The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass, Final Fantasy XII: Revenant Wings, the upcoming Dragon Quest IX, and this month's cover game, Sega and BioWare's Sonic RPG. Gaming's smallest system is putting out the biggest adventures.

I love playing my Wii, just as I did my GameCube, N64, SNES, and NES. But if the DS keeps up this unprecedented momentum, it might just beat 'em all.

CHRIS SLATE EDITOR IN CHIEF

[LETTERS]

Chris Slate here, fresh from purple-coin-collecting in the Toy Time galaxy. Now that I've managed this section for three issues and have read over 2,000 of your letters, I feel like I'm really getting to know NP's readers. Thanks for writing, and keep sending in those emails and envelopes! But can I ask one small favor? Could you tone down the "corrector's corner" messages? I have to read through dozens of them for any tiny misprint!

OLD-SCHOOL SMASH

I looked for the original Super Smash Bros. on Virtual Console, but when I searched the N64 section it wasn't among the very few games that were in there. With Super Smash Bros. Brawl coming out in February, I'd love to play the game that started it all. Do you guys have any idea when we'll see this classic re-released?

JOHN W.

Upcoming Virtual Console releases are a closely guarded secret, but consider this: Metroid went up right before the launch of Metroid Prime 3, and Super Mario Bros. 3 arrived just before Super Mario Galaxy. If the pattern holds up, there's a decent chance that we'll see the return of the original N64 Smash before Brawl arrives.

SHARE THE SPOTLIGHT

Lots of Mario characters have had their own games, like Super Princess Peach, Yoshi's Island, and Mario vs. Donkey Kong. So why hasn't Bowser or Luigi had the chance to star in their own titles?

MACKENZIE B.

A Bowser game would be pretty cool. I vote for an arcade-style versus title where Player 1 tries to kidnap the princess as Bowser while Player 2 tries to stop him as Mario. As for Luigi getting his own game, please allow me to direct your attention to the following:

NINTENDO GAMECUBE.
Luigi's Mansion
E

15 SECONDS OF FAME

What do you have to do to get something printed in the magazine? I've been reading NP for quite a while and have wanted my opinions to be published, but I never had the chance. So, what's the secret to getting picked?

BRANDON12782

You just never can tell, Brandon.

MISSED OPPORTUNITY?

I have rarely been let down by Nintendo's ingenuity, but there has been a huge oversight with the DS. With the system's compact design and capabilities, I find it incredible that a piece of software has yet to be released that would allow you to use the DS as a personal organizer. You would only have to pop in a card with your saved data and, voilà!—you could access a calendar and schedule. You could manage appointments, goals, homework, and even a personal journal. Something like this would be incredibly useful.

ANDREW M.

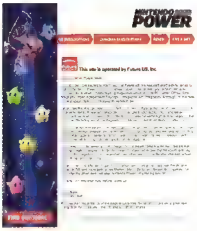
I once would have said that Nintendo should stick to what it does best—making games—and leave functions like those to the other guys. But with the DS and Wii both introducing new non-gaming features all the time, your idea makes a whole lot of sense. I'd buy it!

HAPPY TO HELP

Last May I sold my Wii in the hopes of finding a system that would better suit me, but I soon realized that was a mistake. At the time I just didn't realize how great the console is, but because of Nintendo Power, I've decided to save up to buy it again. You see, after I sold the Wii I kept reading NP and I didn't want to cancel my subscription, and that's what led me to another future purchase. So, thank you, Nintendo Power.

DAN M.

Our pleasure—and welcome back!



[illegible]

The Nintendo Power website kinda stinks at the moment. It would be nice if you guys updated it with information on the latest and upcoming issues. You could also add a forum so that Nintendo fans could discuss things and you guys could interact with us. There could be a place to submit things for the magazine like letters and stuff for the Community section. Regardless of what you guys add to the site, I hope to see a major overhaul of it sometime soon. In the meantime, keep up the good work with the magazine!

ODD_JOB

I hate to say it, but you're right—our website stinks. Rest assured that we do have much bigger plans, including many of the ideas that you mentioned. Just give us a few more months to get it going.

[illegible]

In Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance and Mortal Kombat: Armageddon, Quan Chi seems to be wearing a skirt. Why is he wearing a skirt?

METAWARRIOR

Because he'd look silly fighting in just his underwear.

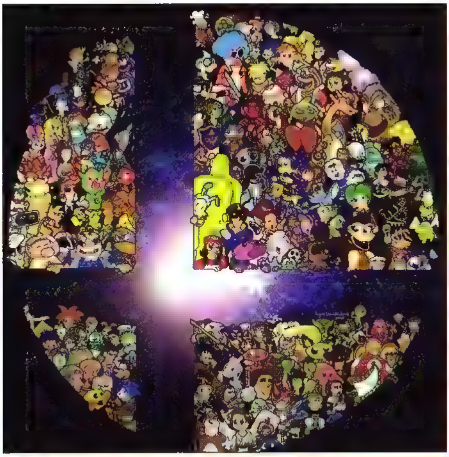
[illegible]

Many people have commented that I think about how Nintendo franchises could tie into Super Smash Bros. Brawl far too much. To pass the time while waiting for the game, I've done sketches of how all sorts of characters could fight (such as Tom Nook, Tingle, and Rawk Hawk), plus stage concepts based on Electroplankton, Meteos, Odama, Donkey Kong, and more.

But once I reached my 100th character sketch, I realized that I wanted to do something even bigger. So, I decided to put all of my efforts into the accompanying image. It's a salute to all of the designers, programmers, and dreamers who work at Nintendo for the countless characters they've come up with, from the well-known to the obscure, spanning all systems and all continents. I hope you enjoy it.

THOMAS P.

Check it out below, everyone!



This must have taken you forever, Thomas—nice work! Any illustration that combines R.O.B. and the guy from Kung-Fu is a masterpiece.

I love that many new Wii games are including Zapper modes, and that older arcade shooters are being re-released. Resident Evil: Umbrella Chronicles, Ghost Squad, and Medal of Honor Heroes 2 are perfect examples. Do you think that Sega might port over The Lost World: Jurassic Park and Jurassic Park III from the arcade?

KEVIN P.

No word on the Jurassic Park games, Kevin, but keep your trigger finger in shape for The House of the Dead 1 & 2 Return this spring.

GAME BOY MEETS GIRL

See, there's this girl at my school and, well, I need your help.

JORDAN K.

Don't worry, Jordan—years of playing video games have taught us everything there is to know about love. Have you tried rescuing her from a far-away castle? Did you mention that her body armor brings out the color in her eyes? If all else fails, try telling her that she's maxed out your love meter.

[illegible]

Have you guys noticed that Nintendo has made the first real left-handed controller with the Wii remote? I realized this while playing Metroid Prime 3. Since I'm left-handed, it's really cool that I can finally use my dominant hand to control Samus's primary weapon. Do you know if Nintendo was thinking about this when they developed the Wii remote?

COLIN M.

Various people at Nintendo have mentioned this fact in past press interviews. I don't know if catering to lefties was one of Nintendo's original goals with the Wii remote, but at the very least it's a great side effect of its two-part design.

GAME MASTER

I found a wormhole in my basement and witnessed some strange things come from it—Metroids, Yoshis, the works. I learned that you can go through it to reach the world of Videoland. On the other side I have seen great evil. Characters from Sega have taken over and the Nintendo characters are helpless to fight back. Some of those who stayed hidden asked for my help so I came back and watched as much *Captain N: The Game Master* as possible. Do you think I have what it takes to be the second Game Master?

TAUKA U.

Would a real Game Master leave the oppressed to suffer while he went home to watch TV? You have much to learn.

[illegible]

In your No More Heroes feature (which was well done, by the way), I noticed that Chris Slate used a lot of exclamation points. After checking the rest of the issue, I saw that he wrote like that in other articles, too. What's the deal?

RANDY C.

I drink five cans of Mountain Dew a day, Randy. Five a day!!!

I want to congratulate you on the excellent Mega Man retrospective in your January issue. It got me thinking that Capcom should take a step back and continue the classic Mega Man series on the DS. It's been years since the original Blue Bomber took on Dr. Wily's forces, and I'd love to see a Mega Man 9 (or 10 if you count Mega Man & Bass as the ninth game).

KYLE S.

Hear! Hear! The entire Nintendo Power staff couldn't agree with you more, Kyle. Nothing against the newer generation of Mega Man, but we miss the original series' simpler, straightforward platform/shooting action. Lords of Capcom, hear our cry!

CARD BATTLER ONAD

I came up with the awesome idea to create a card game where you use Nintendo characters and items to fight. After a month of hard work I created a game similar to Yu-Gi-Oh! that includes all my favorite Nintendo icons. So far I've made over 150 cards. Sorry Chris, but I couldn't create a card of you.

ONAD

Cool cards, Onad! But why couldn't you create one of me? Here, I'll even give you my stats—STR 99, DEF 1, weak against breezes but defeats cheeseburgers instantly.

MARIO'S DILEMMA

I remember from the *Super Mario Bros. Super Show!* that Mario and Luigi are plumbers—as the show's theme song goes, "Plumbing's their game/found a secret warp-zone while working on the drain." So, how come they never plumb? Nintendo is missing out by not fully exploring this part of their classic characters. The history of Italian plumbing is rich and textured and fluffy like the Roman aqueducts.

How about a game where Bowser has a clogged shower, calls a plumber, and is then quite perturbed when Mario shows up at his door with a plunger? I imagine that Bowser takes calm, relaxing bubble baths, and would be upset by a clog in that area. It is probably stressful to be the Koopa King, and I believe that aromatherapy would be soothing for turtle dinosaurs of all persuasions.

Back to the game's story. Mario is torn between his plumber's oath and his personal issues with Bowser. So, where lie Mario's allegiances? To his career and his word or to his loyalty to the princess? What a kerfuffle, eh?

The only problem with this setup is that Bowser doesn't have much hair. Could eyebrow hair clog a drain? Come to think of it, the pipes are generally large and spacious in the toadstool kingdom. There might need to be some suspension of disbelief.

WES FLOWERS

Wow—that's a deep Oscar-worthy drama you've got there, Wes. The only problem is that once Mario decides whether to help Bowser, the game is over. Maybe he has to jump over a lot of pits and Goombas on the way to Bowser's house, or search for a legendary plunger with enough suction to pull out thick eyebrow hair?

THE YEARS FLY BY

I remember the first Super Smash Bros. game for N64. Does that make me old?

AXEL L.

No, but all of us who grew up with the NES now feel ancient. Thanks.

CHRIS POWER

So now Nintendo Power has Chris Hoffman, Chris Shepperd, and Chris Slate. And in Issue 223 on page 84, the Dementium: The Ward review is signed Chris A. Don't tell me there's a fourth one?!

CAROLINE S.

Hey, what is our art director, Chris Imlay—chopped liver?

SLEEPING IN

I found a really cool use for WiiConnect24. My school has an alert system that emails students when there is a snow day. I sent a message to it, and now, sometimes I wake up to a blue light letting me know that I can go back to sleep!

DAVID D.

Creative, but dangerous—you don't want to miss a test because Nintendo sent you a message about a new channel or system update.

GIRL TROUBLE

One day at school, two girls were playing Animal Crossing Wild World. I don't have that game, so I asked them if it's possible to find NES games in it like in the GameCube version. They just looked at me funny and said, "NES games?" Right then, it occurred to me that some girls should not play video games. Are you with me?

ADAM D.

Totally, Adam! Girls are yucky and have cooties. And when you introduce yourself and offer to wash their car, they think you're creepy and won't talk to you, no matter how many paper swans you make for them...um, nevermind

pulse@futureus.com
Or via carrier pigeon at:
Nintendo Power/Pulse
c/o Future US, Inc.
4000 Shoreline Court,
Suite 400
South San Francisco,
CA 94080

NINTENDO POWER
GAME MASTERS

EDITOR IN CHIEF **Chris Slate**
EXECUTIVE EDITOR **Steve Thomason**
SENIOR EDITOR **Chris Hoffman**
ASSOCIATE EDITOR **Justin Cheng**
ART DIRECTOR **Chris Imlay**
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Chris Shepperd, George Sinfield
COPY EDITOR **Candace English**
CONTRIBUTING DESIGNER **Rebekah Lane**
LICENSING MANAGER **Frances Wall Jha**
EDITOR-AT-LARGE **Scott Pelland**

BUSINESS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR **David Cooper, 646-723-5447, dcooper@futureus.com**
ADVERTISING DIRECTOR GAMES GROUP
Nate Hunt, 562-983-8004, nhunt@futureus.com
REGIONAL SALES DIRECTOR (Bay Area)
Christina Grushkin, 206-417-3315, cgrushkin@futureus.com
REGIONAL SALES DIRECTOR (South West)
Isaac Ugay, 949-218-0981, iugay@futureus.com
SR ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE (East Coast)
Benjamin Alessio, 650-238-2324, balessio@futureus.com
DIRECTOR, CORPORATE SALES & MARKETING
Jim Schiekofer, 646-723-5410, jschiekofer@futureus.com
CORP SALES MIDWEST MANAGER **Jodi Sosna, 212-217-1358, jsosna@futureus.com**
CORP SALES WEST MANAGER **Nadine Weiss, 323-493-5929, nweiss@futureus.com**
EASTERN ACCOUNT MANAGER **Marc Zenker, 646-723-5476, mzenker@futureus.com**
AD PROJECT MANAGER **Rhoda Ushijima, 650-238-2474, rushijima@futureus.com**
ADVERTISING COORDINATOR
Arthur St. Germain, 650-238-2571, astgermain@futureus.com
MARKETING MANAGER **Andrea Recio-Ang, arecio-ang@futureus.com**

PRODUCTION
PRODUCTION DIRECTOR **Richie Lesovoy**
PRODUCTION COORDINATOR **Larry Briseno**

CIRCULATION
GROUP CIRCULATION DIRECTOR **Kate Bailey**
NEWSSTAND DIRECTOR **Bill Shewey**
ONLINE CONSUMER MARKETING MANAGER
Betsy Wong
BILLING & RENEWAL MANAGER **Mike Hill**
FULFILLMENT MANAGER **Angi Martinez**
DIRECT MARKETING SPECIALIST
Alexandra Davydova
CUSTOMER SERVICE MANAGER **Mike Manrique**
NEWSSTAND COORDINATOR **Alex Guzman**

FUTURE US, Inc.
4000 Shoreline Court,
Ste 400, South San
Francisco, CA 94080
www futureus-inc com

PRESIDENT **Jonathan Simpson-Bint**
VICE PRESIDENT/COO **Tom Valentino**
CFO **John Sutton**
GENERAL COUNSEL **Charles Schug**
PUBLISHING DIRECTOR/GAMES
Simon Whitcombe
PUBLISHING DIRECTOR/BUS DEV **Dave Barrow**
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR/TECHNOLOGY
Jon Phillips
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR/MUSIC **Brad Tolinski**
DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL SERVICES
Nancy Durlester
MARKETING DIRECTOR **Shawn Roberts**
PRODUCTION DIRECTOR **Richie Lesovoy**

FUTURE PLC
30 Monmouth St., Bath, Avon, BA1 2BW, England
www futureplc com
Tel +44 1225 442244
www.futureplc com

NON EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN Roger Parry
CHIEF EXECUTIVE Stevie Spring
GROUP FINANCE DIRECTOR John Bowman

Nintendo Power Customer Care
PO Box 5770
Harlan, IA 51593-1270
1-866 941 8368
For Subscription Problems Only!
nintendopower@cdsfulfillment com.
http://service futureus-inc com/
REPRINTS: For reprints, contact Reprint Management Services, 717.399 1900 ext 100

Game trademarks and copyrights are property of their respective owners TM, ®, the Nintendo DS logo and the Wii logo are trademarks of Nintendo © 2007 Nintendo

ISSN: 1041-9551

SONIC RIDERS ZERO GRAVITY™

SHIFT INTO ZERO GRAVITY.

18 UNIQUE RIDERS, 60 VEHICLES, 16 DYNAMIC COURSES.

BUCKLE UP AS SONIC RIDERS RETURNS WITH NEW ZERO-G STUNTS.
GET VERTICAL ON WALLS OR GRIND ON ANYTHING THAT FLOATS
IN THE WILDEST RACING EXPERIENCE YET!

AVAILABLE NOW!

WWW.SONICRIDERSZG.COM

EVERYONE
E
Cartoon Violence
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

PlayStation 2

Wii

Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection

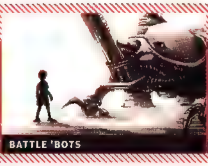
SONIC TEAM™

SEGA®
www.sega.com

© SEGA. SEGA is registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. SEGA, the SEGA logo, the SONIC TEAM logo and SONIC RIDERS: ZERO GRAVITY are either trademarks or registered trademarks of SEGA Corporation. All rights reserved. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Wii and the Wii logo are trademarks of Nintendo. © 2006 Nintendo.

STORMING THE CASTLE

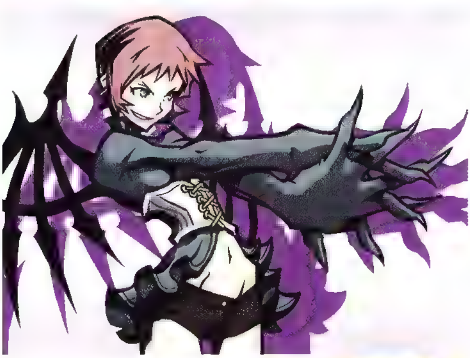
TIME 00:40:25
SCORE 0001780
GET TO DA CHOPPAH!


BATTLE 'BOTS

WONDER STRUCK

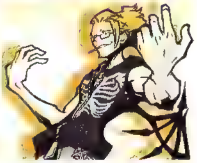
The End Is Near

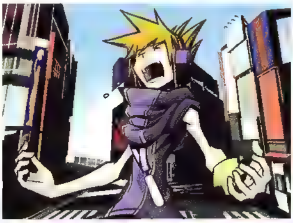
The unorthodox DS adventure formerly known as It's a Wonderful World heads to North America under the decidedly less-cheerful moniker of The World Ends with You.



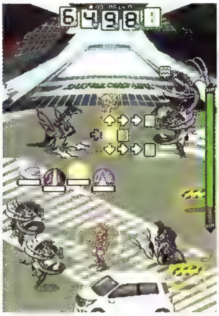
Because it's so heavily steeped in contemporary Japanese culture, we were concerned that It's a Wonderful World—the latest effort from Kingdom Hearts mastermind Tetsuya Nomura—might not make it to these shores. And that would have been a real shame; this boldly creative action-RPG is unlike anything else on DS. Fortunately, Square Enix has done the right thing and announced a spring release for the game, along with a new title: The World Ends with You.

Set in the trendy Tokyo district of Shibuya, The World Ends with You stars a young boy named Neku who receives a mysterious text message informing him that he'll cease to exist in seven days unless he participates in a deadly competition. Hoping to avoid that grim fate, Neku teams with a young girl who receives a similar message, and during battle, you're tasked with controlling both characters at once. Neku occupies the bottom screen, unleashing various psychic attacks as you slash and tap at enemies with the stylus. At the same time, you also have to input specific command strings using the Control Pad and face buttons to execute his partner's attacks on the top screen.

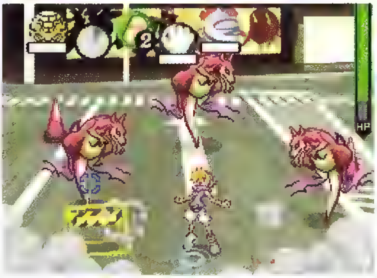


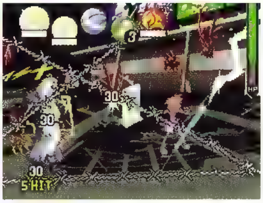


In addition to serving as producer, Nomura provided the character designs for the game, and the graffiti-inspired urban aesthetic stands out from the kind of fantasy fare we usually see from Square Enix (as does the techno-infused soundtrack). We've got high hopes for this one, so expect much more in the months to come. –STEVE T.



Experimental stuff like this is only possible on the DS. That's why we love the little handheld.





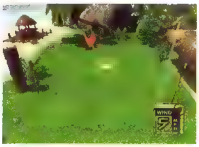
Throughout the game, you'll earn badges that bestow Neku with new attacks and abilities. So contrary to popular belief, you do indeed require some stinking badges.

ATHLETIC DEPT.

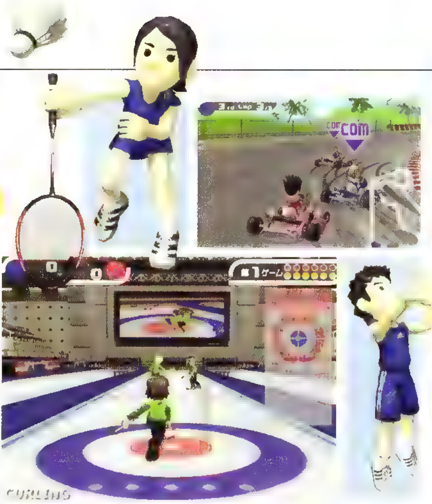
Be a Good Sport

Two new Wii titles—Hudson's Deca Sports and Destineer's Summer Sports—aim to score with the casual crowd.

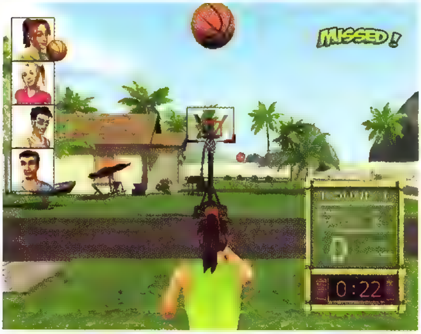
Wii Sports—you know it, you love it, you've mastered it. So what's next? Third-party publishers answer that question with two similar pick-up-and-play sports experiences coming in 2008: Hudson's Deca Sports and Destineer's Summer Sports.



Deca Sports, as its name implies, features 10 separate sporting events that take advantage of the Wii controls in a variety of ways. In figure skating you guide your skater with the nunchuk's Control Stick and flick the remote to perform tricks; in archery you simply point and aim with the remote; volleyball and badminton take a cue from Wii Sports Tennis—your character moves automatically and it's up to you to make a motion to knock the ball or birdie over the net. Rounding out the list are soccer, basketball, snowboarding, kart racing, motocross, and even curling (you hear that, Canada?).

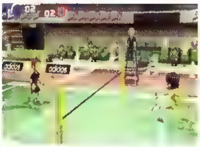


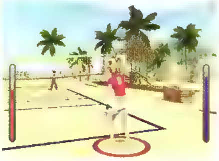
Cute characters and 10 varied, accessible games is what Deca Sports is all about.



Summer Sports features three types of basketball games, including HORSE (or any five- or six-lettered word of your choice). The realistic shooting motion gives you full control over your shot.

Summer Sports enters the competition with a tropical island theme, more-realistic graphics, and eight accessible activities. In addition to unique challenges such as lawn darts and horseshoes, the game features its own take on familiar events including golf, badminton, volleyball, and basketball (in which you hold the remote upside down and make a realistic shooting motion while pressing the B button to launch the ball).





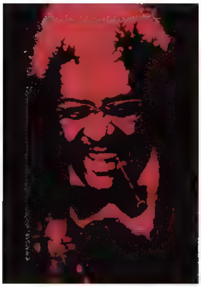
Both Summer Sports (scheduled for release in March) and Deca Sports (planned for May) feature multiple gameplay modes and versus play for up to four players. —CHRIS H.

BIG HAIR

Hail to the King

2K Sports gives boxing the royal treatment with Don King Presents: Prizefighter on Wii and DS.

Many have entered the boxing ring on Wii, but few have succeeded as well as Wii Sports Boxing. Publisher 2K Sports and developer Venom Games—the latter of which made Rocky and Rocky Legends for Xbox and PlayStation 2—hopes to usurp the title of best boxing game with Don King Presents: Prizefighter. Don't think this is yet another cartoony boxer, however—the goal is to make the most realistic boxing experience yet, with what 2K describes as a "revolutionary sports documentary-style narrative." As a boxer, you'll both fight and live the lifestyle, meaning training, promoting, and avoiding the many temptations that accompany fame and success. Says Don King himself, "Don King Presents: Prizefighter is more than a game—it is a glimpse at what life is like in and out of the ring for these incredible athletes." We'll find out if that's hype or the real deal when the game hits Wii and DS this spring. —JUSTIN C.

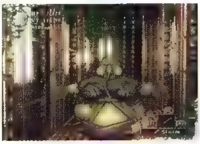


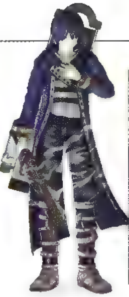
TOUCHED BY AN ANGEL

Fugal Fantasy

Sins, redemption, distorted realities, and life after video game death make Atlus's Baroque a Wii adventure for hardcore fantasy role-players.

Already well received in Japan, dark dungeon crawler Baroque is set to arrive in North America in February. You don the cloak of an unnamed, amnesia-stricken fighter who the Archangel tasks with the job of atoning for the world's sins. You'll accomplish your goals by facing and purifying metabeings in the depths of the mystical Neuro Tower. Though the battles are action-oriented, the game's heavy themes and thorough character customization target players who are accustomed to delving into deep, thought-provoking RPGs. As you explore the tower's floors (which evolve on repeat visits), you accumulate weapons, armor, and stat-enhancing parasites. When your character is defeated, the game continues, with his death creating a new wrinkle in the story. A cataclysmic event, fake angels, distorted enemies, and the dealings of a shady religious organization make the adventure much more than a standard save-the-princess affair. —**GEORGE S.**

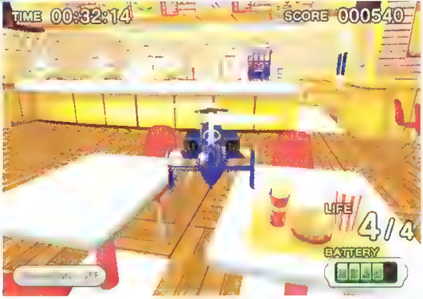




BLADE RUNNER

Spin Control

Aksys Games zigs where others have zagged with small-chopper-in-a-big-world action title MiniCopter: Adventure Flight for Wii.



We can only assume this is the beginning of a military coup against Mayor McCheese.

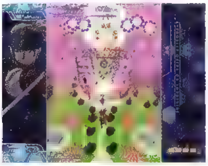
A handful of remote-control-car racers have sped onto Nintendo consoles over the years, but toy-helicopter titles are a rare sight. MiniCopter: Adventure Flight, from Aksys Games, gives RC helicoptering its due with a 42-mission adventure that goes far beyond the hobby's usual open-field settings. The title's seven environments range from the obvious park and kid's room (though it's never a good idea to operate a toy copter indoors) to a hospital and a hotel suite. Every location contains both hidden areas and coins, which you can reveal by using the chopper's air cannon and a suction-powered lifting device. Helicopter customizations, such as the option to switch to a speed-oriented body, help you reach your goals. Two Wii remote control schemes allow you to either tilt or point your way to victory, while a more-traditional control method employs the Classic Controller. The game is set to take flight this spring. —**GEORGE S.**

NO QUARTER

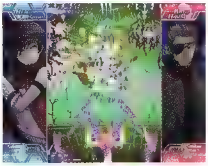
Close Counts

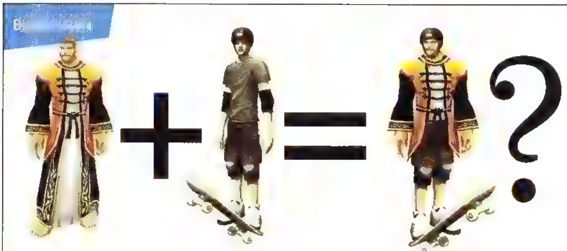
The closer you are to your target, the more your score increases in Aksys Games's Wii adaptation of arcade shooter Castle of Shikigami III.

Rule number one in any shooter is, don't get hit. Bad things happen when enemy bullets collide with your character. The third installment of the Castle of Shikigami series bends that rule, however, by rewarding you for near misses. A Tension Bonus keeps track of your proximity to enemies and their errant shots, and dishes out additional points if you're living on the edge. Since the game has a similarly hectic pacing to that of other contemporary 2-D vertical shooters, such as Ikaruga, danger is never very far away. Unlike in those games, though, you don't pilot a ship in Castle of Shikigami III, but rather one of 10 flesh-and-blood warriors, each of which has a specialized weapon, such as chain lightning or psychic blades, and a unique personality. Character choices account for 55 possible story combinations, with dialogue differing based on who is doing the talking. You can go it alone and use the console-exclusive Dramatic Change mode to switch between two characters, or join up with a friend for co-op play. The shooting starts this spring. —**GEORGE S.**



The enemy's ammunition budget must be astronomical.





Clash of the Titans

Activision and Blizzard combine to give Electronic Arts a run for its money—but gamers could reap the real riches.

Just a matter of weeks after Electronic Arts gobbled up previously independent developers BioWare (Mass Effect, Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic) and Pandemic (Mercenaries, Star Wars: Battlefront), publishing powerhouse Activision upped the stakes by merging with Vivendi Games and Blizzard, the latter being the world's foremost MMO studio and creator of World of Warcraft. It's a very big $18.9 billion deal for the future of games.

Newly named Activision Blizzard will be on nearly level moneymaking ground with EA, but to gamers there will be no immediate indications that anything major has gone down—don't expect to see a Call of Duty real-time strategy game or "World of Warcraft Pro Skater" anytime soon. In fact, you'll still see all three pre-deal company names on their respective franchises; COD will continue to bear the Activision brand, the upcoming StarCraft 2 will be a Blizzard game, the next Crash or Spyro title will come from Vivendi Games, and so on.

This megadeal introduces plenty of opportunities, though; for instance, Activision will now have unrestricted access to Universal Music Group's song catalog for future Guitar Hero titles, and games based on major Universal film franchises (which include the upcoming Incredible Hulk) could be developed by Activision's top-tier talent. Perhaps most important is the very real possibility that it will lead to better games from EA and Activision Blizzard over the next few years as the gaming giants square off—much as console manufacturers did in the olden days—to outdo one another by putting their best effort forward in the face of serious competition. —RANDY N

Build a Bug-Bot

Drone Tactics brings custom robot rumbles to DS.

Taking a break from the medical action genre (hey, it's no weirder than survival-horror), Trauma Center creator Atlus is gearing up for some heavy metal robot role-playing action on the DS's twin screens with Drone Tactics. Set for release this spring, the game combines RPG and turn-based strategy elements and allows players to build and customize battalions of insect-inspired robots from a massive stockpile of more than 100 unique weapons and body parts.

We're guessing bug spray's not gonna work on this one.

The game will offer upwards of two-dozen campaign missions set in the vibrant-hued land of Cimexus against the ominously monikered "Black Swarm." An additional 50 bonus "challenge" stages and head-to-head, local wireless play should hopefully prove more than enough to keep hardcore mech masters busy after the credits roll. RANDY N.

Your online source for great t-shirts
movies
bands
cartoons
video games
TV shows
DUNDER MIFFLIN PAPER COMPANY
TURTLES
SAVE 20%
visit 80sTees.com/np
Limited time offer
80sTees.com
great t-shirts for the kid in us all!
1-866-80sTees
www.80sTees.com/np

GAME WATCH FORECAST

There were a lot of great games released in 2007, but a new year means lots of new games to look forward to. So many games and so little time to play them all!

Wii

Alone in the Dark	Atari	SPR 08
Balloon Pop	Tommo	1/08
Baroque	Atlus	2/08
Blast Works: Build, Fuse & Destroy	Majesco	1/08
Blitz: The League	Midway	1/08
Blox	Electronic Arts	3/08
Bomberman Land	Hudson	1/08
Brothers in Arms: Road to Hill 30	Ubisoft	1/08
Bully: Scholarship Edition	Rockstar Games	2/08
Cabela's Monster Bass	Activision	1/08
Castle of Shikigami III	Aksys	SPR 08
The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian	Disney Interactive	5/08
Cocoto Magic Circus	Conspiracy Entertainment	Q1 08
CSI: Hard Evidence	Ubisoft	1/08
de Blob	THQ	Q1 08
The Destiny of Zorro	Pronto Games	TBA
Deca Sports*	Hudson	TBA
Destroy All Humans! Big Willy Unleashed	THQ	3/08
Disaster: Day of Crisis	Nintendo	TBA
The Dog Island	Ubisoft	3/08
Don King Presents: Prizefighter	Take-Two Interactive	Q2 08
Dragon Quest Swords: The Masked Queen and the Tower of Mirrors	Square Enix	2/08
Dragonology	Codemasters	Q4 08
Dream Pinball	SouthPeak Interactive	2/08
Emergency Mayhem	Codemasters	4/08
Endless Ocean	Nintendo	1/08
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Crystal Bearers	Square Enix	TBA
Furu Furu Park	Majesco	1/08
Ghostbusters	Sierra Entertainment	TBA
Go, Diego, Go!: Safari Rescue	Take-Two Interactive	2/08
Harvest Moon Heroes	Natsume	1/08
Harvey Birdman: Attorney at Law	Capcom	1/08
The House of the Dead 2&3: Return	Sega	SPR 08
Indoor Sports	Konami	TBA
Iron Man	Sega	5/08
Jumper	Brash Entertainment	2/08
Kawasaki Jetski	Destineer	1/08
Kidz Sports: Ice Hockey	Destineer	1/08
Kidz Sports: International Soccer	Destineer	1/08
Kitty Luv	Activision	1/08
LEGO Batman: The Videogame	Warner Bros. Interactive	2008
LEGO Indiana Jones: The Videogame	LucasArts	Q2 08
Line Rider	InXile	SPR 08
London Taxi: Rush Hour	Activision	1/08
Luxor: Pharaoh's Challenge	Mumbo Jumbo	1/08
Mario Kart Wii*	Nintendo	SPR 08
MiniCopter: Adventure Flight	Aksys	Q2 08
MLB 2K8	2K Games	Q1 08
Monkey King: The Legend Begins	Tommo	1/08
Monster Lab	Eidos	SUM 08
Mushroom Men	Gamecock Media Group	FALL 08
MX vs. ATV Untamed	THQ	1/08
My Horse and Me	Atari	2/08
Myth Makers: Super Kart GP	Conspiracy	TBA
Ninja Reflex	Electronic Arts	3/08
Nitrobike	Ubisoft	1/08
No More Heroes	Ubisoft	2/08
Obscure: The Aftermath	Ignition	SPR 08
Octopuzzle	Atlus/ Conspiracy	TBA
Okami	Capcom	SPR 08
One Piece: Unlimited Adventure	Namco Bandai	1/08
Pinball Hall of Fame: The Williams Collection	Crave	3/08
Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	Konami	Q1 08
Rebel Raiders: Operation Nighthawk	Jack of All Games	2/08
Runaway	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
Rygar: The Battle of Argus	Tecmo	1/08
Samba de Amigo	Sega	SPR 08
Samurai Warriors: Katana	Koei	1/08
Sega Bass Fishing	Sega	2/08
Sega Superstars Tennis	Sega	3/08
Sid Meier's Civilization Revolution	2K Games	9/08
Sonic Riders: Zero Gravity	Sega	Q1 08
Space Station Tycoon	Namco Bandai	2/08
Speed Racer	Warner Bros. Interactive	5/08
The Spiderwick Chronicles	Sierra	2/08
Spore	Electronic Arts	TBA
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	LucasArts	SPR 08
Summer Sports	Destineer	TBA
Super Smash Bros. Brawl	Nintendo	2/08
TNA iMPACT!	Midway	TBA
Top Spin Tennis	2K Sports	SPR 08
We Love Golf	Capcom	TBA
Wii Fit	Nintendo	TBA
Wild Earth: African Safari	Majesco	Q2 08
Wizardology	Codemasters	Q4 08
Wonderworld Amusement Park	Majesco	Q3 08
Worms: A Space Oddity	THQ	3/08
WWII Aces	Destineer	Q1 08
Yamaha Supercross	Destination Software	2/08

NINTENDO DS

Apollo Justice: Ace Attorney	Capcom	2/08
Advance Wars: Days of Ruin	Nintendo	1/08
Alone in the Dark	Atari	TBA
Assassin's Creed	Ubisoft	2/08
Barnyard Blast	Destination Software	1/08
Best of Tests DS	Conspiracy Entertainment	2/08
Bomberman Land Touch! 2	Hudson	1/08
Brain Assist	Sega	2/08
Brain Challenge	Ubisoft	1/08
Bratz: Super Babyz	THQ	2/08
Brave	SouthPeak Interactive	TBA
Broken Sword	Ubisoft	3/08
Bubble Bobble Double Shot	Ignition Entertainment	2/08
The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian	Disney Interactive	5/08
Corvette Evolution GT	Valcon	1/08
CSI: Miami Nights	Ubisoft	1/08
de Blob	THQ	Q1 08
Diary Girl	Konami	2/08
Dinosaur King	Sega	SUM 08
Disciples II	Strategy First	3/08
Disney Friends	Disney Interactive	3/08
Drone Tactics	Atlus	Q1 08
Don King Presents: Prizefighter	Take-Two Interactive	Q2 08
Doodle Hex	TBA	TBA
Dragonology	Codemasters	Q4 08
Dream Pinball	SouthPeak Interactive	2/08
Dungeon Explorer: Warriors of Ancient Arts	Hudson Soft.	2/08
Eco Creatures: Save the Forest	Majesco	TBA
FIFA Street 3	Electronic Arts	2/08
Final Fantasy IV	Square Enix	TBA
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Ring of Fates	Square Enix	3/08
Final Fantasy Tactics A2: The Sealed Grimoire	Square Enix	TBA
Garfield Gets Real	Destination Software	2/08
GoPets: Vacation Island	Konami	1/08
Harvest Moon: Island of Happiness	Natsume	1/08
Homie Rollerz	Destineer	1/08
Imagine: Figure Skater	Ubisoft	2/08
Insecticide	Gamecock Media Group	1/08
Jackass: The Game	Red Mile	1/08
LEGO Indiana Jones: The Videogame	LucasArts	Q2 08
Line Rider	InXile	SPR 08
M&M's Kart Racing	Destination Software	1/08
Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games	Sega	1/08
Miami Nights Singles in the City	Ubisoft	1/08
Mushroom Men: Rise of the Fungi	Gamecock Media Group	Q2 08
My Horse and Me	Atari	2/08
My Life Coach	Ubisoft	3/08
Mysterious Dungeon: Shiren the Wanderer	Chunsoft	2/08
N+	Atari	3/08
Nanostray 2	Majesco	3/08
New Zealand Story Revolution	Ignition Entertainment	2/08
Ninja Gaiden: Dragon Sword	Tecmo	2/08
Ninja Reflex	Electronic Arts	3/08
Ninjatown	SouthPeak Interactive	TBA
Nintendo Crossword*	Nintendo	TBA
Pet Shop	Ubisoft	3/08
Pirate Battle	Orbital Media	TBA
Prey the Stars	Koei	3/08
Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	Konami	Q1 08
Professor Branium's Games	Destineer	3/08
Professor Layton and the Curious Village	Nintendo	2/08
Puppy Palace	Ubisoft	2/08
River King Mystic Valley	Natsume	TBA
Robo-Revolt Robocalypse Now	Vogster	SPR 08
Runaway: The Dream of the Turtle	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
Sega Superstars Tennis	Sega	3/08
Sid Meier's Civilization Revolution	2K Games	4/08
Sonic Chronicles: The Dark Brotherhood	Sega	FALL 08
Spectrobes II	Disney Interactive	FALL 08
Speed Racer	Warner Bros. Interactive	5/08
The Spiderwick Chronicles	Sierra	2/08
Spore	Electronic Arts	TBA
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	LucasArts	SPR 08
Super Dodgeball Brawlers	Aksys	SPR 08
Suzuki Super-Bikes II: Riding Challenge	Jack of All Games	2/08
Teenage Zombies: Invasion of the Alien Brain Thingys	Ignition	SPR 08
Ultimate Brain Games	Telegames	1/08
Ultimate Card Games	Telegames	1/08
Viva Pinata DS	TBA	TBA
Warlords DS	Strategy First	TBA
Wild Petz: Tigerz	Ubisoft	2/08
Wizardology	Codemasters	Q4 08
The World Ends With You	Square Enix	TBA
Zoo Tycoon 2	THQ	2/08

NOTE: RELEASE DATES OFTEN CHANGE *TENTATIVE TITLE

You Gotta Believe

The creators of Parappa the Rapper reunite for a Wii-exclusive project.

Musician Masaya Matsuura, artist Rodney Greenblat, and development studio NanaOn-Sha have joined forces once again to produce an all-new music game headed exclusively to Wii. Majesco will publish the late-2008 release. More details as we get 'em.

Wii Won't Get GTA

Take-Two's CEO confirms what we all expected

Take-Two held a conference call for their Fourth Quarter 2007 Earnings Results, and while that may sound rather boring, they did confirm that the upcoming GTA IV will *not* be coming to Wii. Said Take-Two CEO Ben Feder, "No disrespect meant for the platform, but I think there are other titles that are better suited to Wii than Grand Theft Auto IV."

A Konami New Year

Lost in Blue 3, Target: Terror, and more karaoke are on the way.

Konami's kicking off 2008 with a bang. The publisher is bringing Zapper-based shooter Target: Terror to Wii, along with American Idol Presents Karaoke Revolution Encore. For DS, look for survival adventure Lost in Blue 3, featuring four playable characters and 20 minigames.

UNTANGLE A STICKY WEB OF CRIME
BUG DETECTIVE CITY OF TROI
InSecticide
NINTENDO DS
InSecticide

ALSO AVAILABLE AS A DIGITAL DOWNLOAD FOR PC

"...an intriguing mix of action, humor, and story."
– GAMESPOT

"...featuring both heavy action and in-depth detective gameplay."
– IGN

EVERYONE 10+
Cartoon Violence
Crude Humor
Use of Tobacco
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

NINTENDO DS™

PRE-ORDER NOW!
COMING FEBRUARY 2008
INSECTICIDETHEGAME.COM

CREATED BY Crackpot ENTERTAINMENT

PUBLISHED BY GAMECOCK MEDIA GROUP

Screens from Nintendo DS™ version

© 2007 Crackpot Entertainment, LLC. Insecticide is a trademark of Crackpot Entertainment, LLC. All Rights Reserved. © 2007. All Rights Reserved. © 2007 Gamecock Media Group, All Rights Reserved. Nintendo DS is a trademark of Nintendo. © 2004 Nintendo.

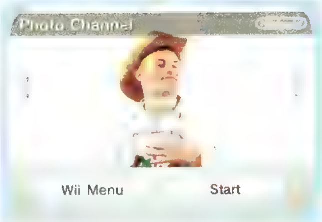
Wii Channels

Worth 1,000 Words

Photography is at the forefront this month—the Photo Channel receives an upgrade and Pokémon Snap arrives on Virtual Console.

PICTURE THIS

Slideshows, doodles, picture sharing, and more—the Photo Channel has been a Wii staple since the system debuted more than a year ago. Now it's gaining some extra functionality with the upgrade to Photo Channel 1.1. The new version allows you to customize your Photo Channel icon on the Wii menu with your own photos; to do so, simply press the Post button while viewing a photo, then select Post to the Wii Menu. You can even take a picture in the Virtual Console title Pokémon Snap and set it as your icon. Additionally, Photo Channel 1.1 lets you play AAC (advanced audio coding) music files, including MP4 audio files in .m4a format, off an SD memory card during slideshows. The AAC compatibility replaces the ability to play MP3 music files within the Photo Channel, but AAC files are of higher quality than MP3s. If you don't already have Photo Channel 1.1, you can download it for free from the latest version of the Wii Shop Channel (which can be obtained by performing a system update), in the WiiWare section.



Nothing lets you show your love of Nintendo Power like a custom Photo Channel menu screen.

VIRTUAL CONSOLE

9

VC Games

STAFF PICK!

POKéMON SNAP

Chris Sl's Pick

[illegible]

ALIEN STORM

PLATFORM: SEGA GENESIS
PUBLISHER: SEGA
GENRE: ACTION
ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1991

WHAT: Based on an obscure arcade game, Alien Storm is essentially a sci-fi take on Sega's own Golden Axe formula (albeit with looser controls and a roll ability in place of jumping).

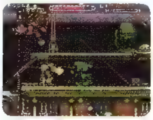
WHY: A fast pace, three distinct characters, and co-op play make for a decent action game. First-person shooting stages add some interesting diversity. —CH

BASEBALL STARS 2

PLATFORM: NEOGEO
PUBLISHER: SNK/D4
GENRE: SPORTS
ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1992

WHAT: This arcade-style take on the great American pastime offers fast-paced gameplay and a cinematic presentation.

WHY: Those with fond memories of Baseball Stars on the NES should be warned that this installment doesn't provide the same opportunities to manage your roster. It's still fun; just not nearly as deep. —ST



CYBERNATOR

PLATFORM: SUPER NES
PUBLISHER: KONAMI
GENRE: ACTION
ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1993

WHAT: Cybernator's a side-scrolling, run-'n'-gun-style shooter on the Super NES, with a slight twist: this time, you're piloting a giant robot.

WHY: Yes, it's the censored North American version of the game, but it's still enjoyable. Plus, you can't go wrong with giant robots. A word of warning, however: Cybernator is a challenging game, so easily frustrated gamers might want to pass. —JC

THE DYNASTIC HERO

PLATFORM: TURBOGRAFX CD
PUBLISHER: HUDSON
GENRE: ADVENTURE
ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1994

WHAT: Previously released for Virtual Console in its Sega incarnation (Wonder Boy in Monster World), The Dynastic Hero is a side-scrolling action-RPG.

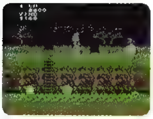
WHY: The game's a solid adventure with some minor improvements over Wonder Boy. There's little reason to download The Dynastic Hero, however, if you already have the earlier version. —CH

ETERNAL CHAMPIONS

PLATFORM: SEGA GENESIS
PUBLISHER: SEGA
GENRE: FIGHTING
ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1993

WHAT: Sega's contribution to the 2-D fighting craze lets you choose from nine characters and duke it out with plentiful special moves. The unusual cast is different to say the least.

WHY: It's no Street Fighter II, but Eternal Champions does feature a wide array of stage-specific finishing moves. They're pretty impressive—if you can pull them off. —CH



GHOSTS 'N GOBLINS

PLATFORM: NES
PUBLISHER: CAPCOM
GENRE: ACTION
ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1986

WHAT: A side-scrolling platform-action game with a horror motif, Ghosts 'n Goblins is known for its rewarding gameplay, catchy music, and soul-crushing difficulty.

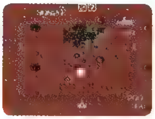
WHY: Ghosts 'n Goblins pales in comparison to its sequels (which are already available on Virtual Console), but it's still fun if you can handle the insane challenge. —CH

MONSTER LAIR

PLATFORM: TURBOGRAFX CD
PUBLISHER: HUDSON
GENRE: SHOOTER
ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1990

WHAT: Born out of the same series that created Adventure Island, Monster Lair is a side-scrolling action-shooter for one or two players. The gameplay is divided between pure shooting levels and on-foot stages with platforming elements.

WHY: The mix of play styles prevents the game from falling into me-too territory. —CH



ZANAC

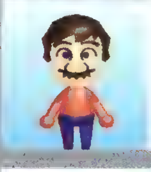
PLATFORM: NES
PUBLISHER: FCI/D4
GENRE: SHOOTER
ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1987

WHAT: A vertical-scrolling shooter, Zanac is best-known for its adaptive AI (play well and be "rewarded" with more enemies; play poorly and face fewer).

WHY: If you want a challenge. Despite the possibility of an easier fight thanks to the adaptive AI, the game can still be quite difficult. —JC

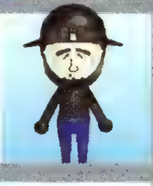
Check 'Em Out

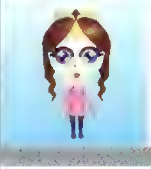
[illegible] chance to show off their artistic skills by creating and submitting Miis based on specific themes. Here's a look at the best submissions, as deter- [illegible]



Mustache? Check. Red shirt? Check. Blue pants? Check. Wes's Mario captured the essence of Nintendo's beloved mascot.

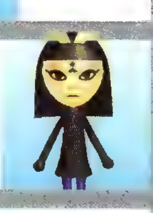
Creative use of facial features and accessories create a convincing illusion that Chad's pilgrim is wearing a hat. Brilliant!

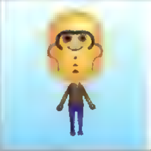




DeAndre's sparkly-eyed tooth fairy took home the prize. What does she do with all those teeth, anyway?

A decorative headdress and heavy eye makeup are key aspects of Rorschach's first-place-winning Cleopatra.





Mook cleverly created his gingerbread man on only his Mii's face, separating his entry from the competition.

NINTENDO PRESENTS...

When the last issue went to press, the details of giving Virtual Console games as gifts were still being finalized. As it turns out, the gift-giving feature is a new addition to the Wii Shop Channel, not a separate channel. You can obtain the feature by performing a Wii system update.

Bugs, dinosaurs, zombies, and robots have invaded this month's previews.

Apollo Justice: Ace Attorney Pg. 25
Brain Assist Pg. 30
Dinosaur King Pg. 26
Dungeon Explorer: Warriors of Ancient Arts Pg. 32
Eco-Creatures: Save the Forest Pg. 30
The House of the Dead 2 & 3 Return Pg. 25
Insecticide Pg. 32
Mushroom Men: Rise of the Fungi Pg. 29
Robo-Revolt: Robocalypse Now Pg. 24
Sega Superstars Tennis Pg. 24
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed Pg. 22
Super Dodgeball Brawlers Pg. 28
Super Smash Bros. Brawl Pg. 23
WWII Aces Pg. 28

Jedi Gone Wild

>STAR WARS: THE FORCE UNLEASHED

PLATFORM: **Wii (ALSO ON DS)** • PUBLISHER: **LUCASARTS**
DEVELOPER: **KROME** • RELEASE: **APRIL 2008**

If you're a Star Wars fanatic like me, then you may have wondered why the Jedi and Sith never do very much with the Force. The most impressive things we saw in the movies were Vader throwing some crates around and Yoda pulling an X-wing out of the mud. So, after watching what the Force can do in any 10 seconds of Star Wars: The Force Unleashed, it's hard to go back to the movies.

This is an over-the-top version of the Force in which TIE fighters are thrown around like rag dolls and Star Destroyers are yanked out of the sky. You can use the Force to solve simple puzzles (like raising submerged junk to form a bridge across a toxic pond), to push enemies away, or even to charge up foes with lightning to use them as bombs.

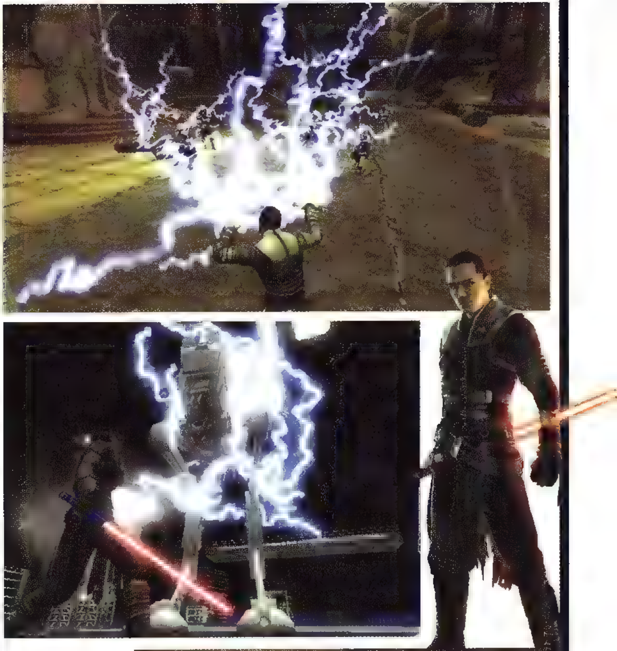
If that last move sounds a little "Dark Side," it's with good reason—you play as Darth Vader's secret apprentice. The game takes place between Episodes III and IV, during the rise of the Empire. Your mission is to hunt down and destroy the last of the Jedi, but through the story's many twists and turns you'll begin to see the error of your ways. Big gaps in the Star Wars timeline are filled in with some major shockers that longtime fans should really enjoy.

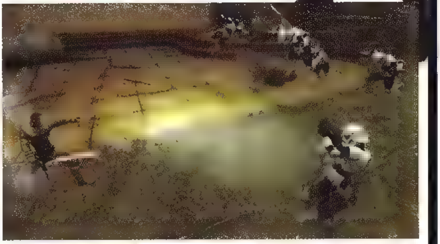
The Force Unleashed introduces new characters to the Star Wars universe, such as Juno Eclipse, the pilot of your ship (the *Rogue Shadow*) and your love interest. Also, more of a focus is put on fan-favorite side characters like the Jedi Shaak Ti, and fans will recognize many familiar planets mixed in with the new locations.

Using the Force is cool, but of course, this just wouldn't be a Star Wars game without a lightsaber. It's controlled by swinging the Wii remote up, down, left, and right, and by thrusting it forward. Rounding out the combat system are both lightsaber and Force Power combo attacks, and experience points can be spent on more Force Powers.

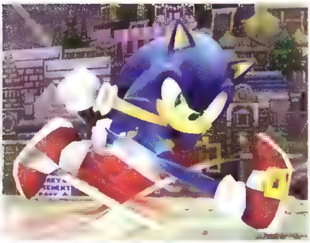
The Wii version of the game has an exclusive Duel mode, which is a one-on-one fighting game with 25 characters to choose from. Victory terms can be set so that the first to five wins, or based on a time limit.

There is also a DS version of the game, developed by N-Space, which follows the same story but plays very differently. Both titles release in April, so we should have reviews for you soon. Until then, remember: the Force will be with you...always. —CHRIS SL

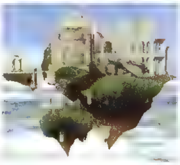




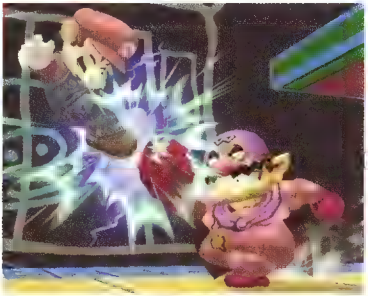
Vader's secret apprentice is one tough dude. Not only does he make Storm Troopers look even more inept than usual, but see that AT-ST above? He can jump up and slice it in *half*. As Yoda might say, "Badass, he is."



Even Sin and Punishment's Saki gets in on the action.



Many of the stages from Super Smash Bros. Melee return, including the massive Zelda temple stage.



[Above] The fight to get the Smash Ball might be more destructive than the Final Smash move it allows you to unleash. [Below] Each character comes in many different flavors.

0 14 78
200
200

Web of Intrigue

> SUPER SMASH BROS. BRAWL

PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **NINTENDO** • RELEASE: **FEBRUARY 2008**

Smash Bros. Dojo (www.smashbros.com) keeps churning out important info about the coming Brawl, thanks to game director Masahiro Sakurai's daily updates. Recently the site has delved into multiplayer dynamics, returning features from Super Smash Bros. Melee, and Pokémon—*lots* of Pokémon.

On the multiplayer front, the news is that you can set up a session for up to 16 participants (with up to four playing at a given time), and the game will manage player rotation between matches. If, for example, you want to have the two players who had the lowest point totals in the last match replaced by challengers, the losers will be put at the back of the line automatically, and the incoming players—along with their control-configuration preferences—will join the fray. Sakurai suggests that if all of the participants are Smash Bros. veterans, you should set it up so that the losers rotate out, but if there are newbies in the mix, you might want to have winners opt out to give the less-experienced brawlers more playing time.

The Pokémon news concerns Pokémon that will pop out of Poké Balls. In addition to a gaggle of already-announced Pokémon that have not appeared in previous Smash Bros. installments (among them Piplup, Munchlax, and Deoxys), Sakurai let us know that several Pokémon, such as Suicune, Lugia, Bellossom, Ho-oh, Snorlax, and the rare Celebi and Mew, will be returning. In the last few weeks, Bonsly was also added. Considering that Pikachu is part of the playable-character roster, and that the Pokémon Trainer (another playable character) will be bringing Squirtle, Ivysaur, and Charizard along with him, Pokémon fans will have a lot of choices.

On the subject of returning features, Sakurai recently announced that Brawl will bring back Events mode, which puts you into a series of specific scenarios. In one scene you're Meta Knight trying to keep Kirby off Battleship Halberd. In another you're Pit, attempting to destroy Skyworld with Wario in the way. You can even play some challenges in co-op mode. Also coming back are several stages from Melee, all of them rejiggered for Wii, such as the Temple stage inspired by Zelda II: The Adventure of Link. Given that there were already 17 new stages announced for Brawl before the Melee stages came into the mix, clearly the upcoming Smash will give you more battle locales than ever.

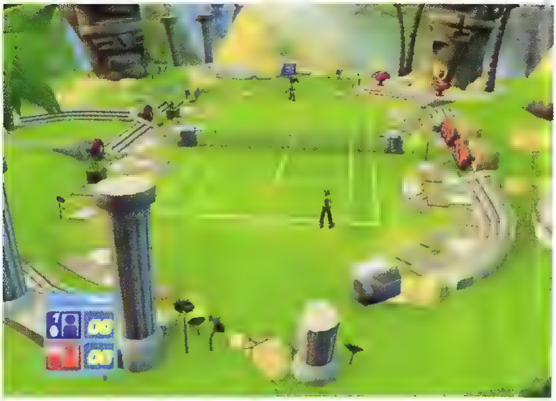
Another recent announcement worth noting is the availability of the sound test from the start (not an unlockable feature this time). Reinvented musical themes from Nintendo's history have been a big focus on the Smash Bros. Dojo site, so Sakurai wanted to make sure that you could listen to them as soon as you plugged in the game. —GEORGE S.

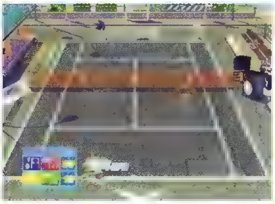
Game, Set, Sega

>SEGA SUPERSTARS TENNIS

PLATFORM: **Wii (ALSO ON DS)** • PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **SUMO DIGITAL** • RELEASE: **MARCH 2008**

For longtime fans of the house that Sonic built, Sega Superstars Tennis unabashedly tugs on strings of nostalgia with an impressive collection of characters and courts from the company's glory days. The roster includes Sonic, Tails, and Dr. Eggman from Sonic the Hedgehog, AiAi from Super Monkey Ball, Amigo from Samba de Amigo, Beat from Jet Set Radio, Ulala from Space Channel 5, and NiGHTS from...uh, NiGHTS, as well as eight unlockable bonus characters. Each competitor excels at different facets of the game, and possesses a unique Superstar Power that wreaks havoc with his or her opponent. Ulala, for instance, beckons a group of aliens to distract the other player with an infectious dance. Courts feature classic tunes from their corresponding franchises, and a huge assortment of Sega-themed minigames round out the festivities. What better way to practice your backhand than by hitting balls at shambling hordes of zombies from The House of the Dead? —STEVE T.





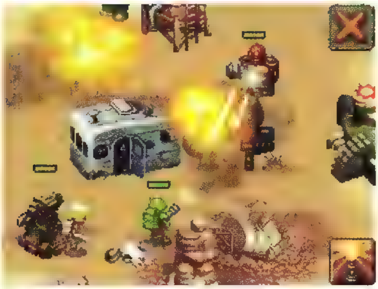
While playing a match on the above court, we heard music from Sonic 1, Sonic 2, and if our memories aren't failing us, Sonic CD.

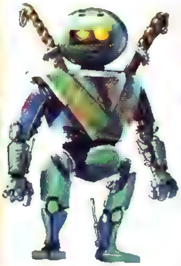
Band of 'Bots

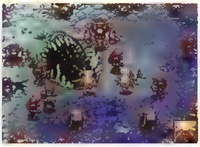
>ROBO-REVOLT: ROBOCALYPSE NOW

PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **VOGSTER**
DEVELOPER: **VOGSTER** • RELEASE: **SPRING 2008**

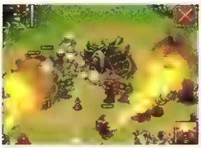
Stylus-driven touch control has proven to work for genres as diverse as puzzle and adventure, but perhaps no game type is more natural for tap-and-draw play as real-time strategy. Several DS titles, such as the upcoming Eco-Creatures: Save the Forest (previewed this issue), have incorporated RTS elements, but Nintendo newcomer Vogster promises that its Robo-Revolt will be the handheld's first textbook RTS title. A waypoint-marking system for sending your units into the fray and an advanced pathfinding program for AI-controlled units make it easy for forces to find each other on the battlefield. It sounds serious, but an over-the-top art style and robot warriors who dish out one-liners put the game in more of the Worms camp than the Medal of Honor world (even though the combatants have the personalities of gritty World War II vets). Big explosions, nonstop destruction, and robot parts flying in every direction are played for laughs, the idea being that if you lose a few mechanoids, you can always make more. The fracas features 20 missions, 11 robot types, 25 weapons (such as Ricochet Grenades and Magnet Grenades), and the ability for you to combine units into a single fighting machine. —GEORGE S.



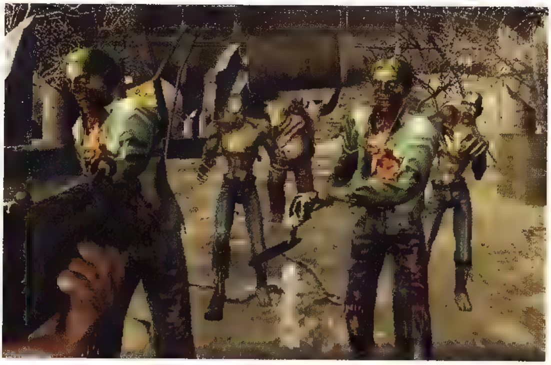




Not shown: the DS's second screen. Reportedly, it will feature a map of the full battlefield.



Don't hurt the Medic.



You've got to appreciate the effort that the undead put into coordinating their outfits with one another.

Relive the Gory Days

>THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD 2 & 3 RETURN

PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **SEGA** • RELEASE: **SPRING 2008**

Some gamers might not pay much attention to the re-release of a couple of old games, but in the case of The House of the Dead 2 & 3 Return compilation, that would be a big mistake. We had the chance to take Zapper in hand to blast some zombies ourselves this month, and while we knew exactly what we were in for, we were surprised at how much fun these decade-old games still are. The nonstop arcade-style action provides the best pure shooting experience we've had with the Zapper so far.

While the graphics certainly have some retro dust on them, they hold up pretty well. Both games are arcade-perfect ports and run at 60 frames per second. With action this fast, we wouldn't have minded playing the original House of the Dead, which Sega left out because it deemed the graphics too dated.

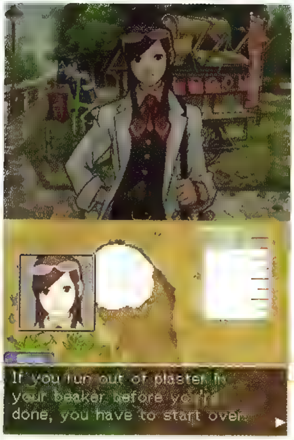
Two arcade classics, new bonus content (Sega won't say what just yet), and one of the best reasons so far to own a Zapper, all for a penny shy of $30. Only the zombies could dislike that. —CHRIS SL.

New Evidence

>APOLLO JUSTICE: ACE ATTORNEY

PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **CAPCOM**
DEVELOPER: **CAPCOM** • RELEASE: **FEBRUARY 2008**

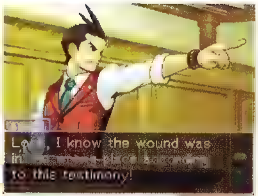
If you read last month's substantial Apollo Justice: Ace Attorney feature, then you already know what to expect from the fourth installment of Capcom's lighthearted legal series—new cases, new characters, new touch-screen features, and a deep story set seven years after the previous Ace Attorney games. Rookie lawyer Apollo Justice is picking up where Phoenix Wright left off, and in addition to investigating crime scenes and raising objections by presenting evidence, Apollo can perceive witnesses' nervous habits to see through their lies. One case even lets you experience firsthand how Phoenix fell from grace. If that's got you itching for some legal action, Capcom's got relief on the way; in January you'll be able to download an Apollo Justice demo from DS Download Stations, and a Flash version of the game's first case will be available on the official Ace Attorney website (www.ace-attorney.com). The site will also feature producer Minae Matsukawa's blog, where she'll discuss the game with various members of the development team. —CHRIS H.



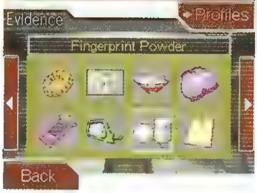
If you run out of plaster in your beaker before you're done, you have to start over.

Creating plaster casts of footprints is but one forensics technique that Apollo gets to use during his investigations. He'll also dust for fingerprints (and toeprints) and spray chemicals to find trace amounts of blood or poison.

I'll leave the pondering of mysteries to yo[illegible]m outta here.



L[illegible], I know the wound was in[illegible] to this testimony!



Dino Might

> DINOSAUR KING

PLATFORM: DS • **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
DEVELOPER: CLIMAX ENT. • **RELEASE:** SUMMER 2008

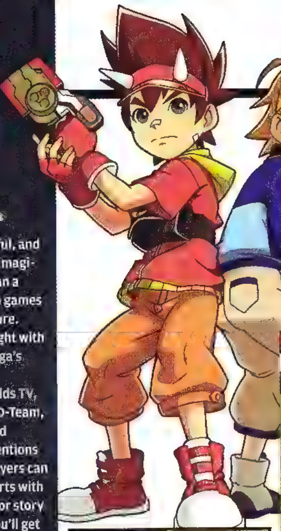
Everybody loves dinosaurs. Big, powerful, and otherworldly, dinosaurs have been sparking imaginations in schools and museums for more than a century, and they're a frequent topic of video games (Yoshi, anyone?) and other forms of pop culture. Later this year, you'll get to find, train, and fight with these mysterious, monstrous creatures in Sega's Pokémon-esque Dinosaur King for DS.

Already a weekly cartoon show on Fox's 4Kids TV, Dinosaur King follows the adventures of the D-Team, Max and Rex, as they use the power of revived dinosaurs to save the world from the evil intentions of the nefarious Dr. Z and his Alpha Gang. Players can choose from either Max or Rex—each one starts with a different dino at his command and has minor story differences—but no matter which you use, you'll get to find dinosaur fossils, convert that fossil data into cards, and then use the cards in conjunction with the DinoShot gun to bring the dinosaurs to life, allowing them to fight other dinos in turn-based battles.

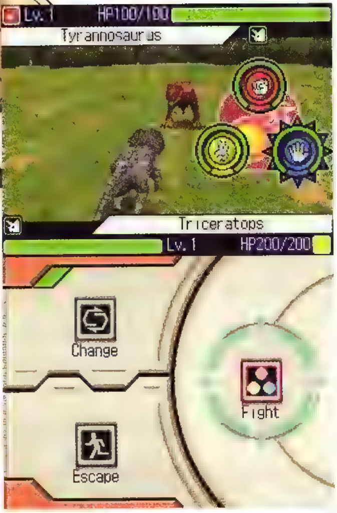
Taking inspiration from Sega's Japanese Mushi King series, combat in Dinosaur King plays out using a rock-paper-scissors fighting system. No, the Tyrannosaurs don't suddenly start making scissors shapes with their scrawny arms or anything, but the same attack priorities apply. Rock (tail attacks) beats scissors (tackles), which in turn beats paper (throws), which completes the cycle by beating rock. Unlike in real-life rock-paper-scissors, your opponents in Dinosaur King tend to give away their moves with dialogue before each turn, so combat relies on skill instead of luck. Additionally, some moves have elemental attributes, and certain attacks act as superpowerful critical moves. The specifics of the attacks vary by dino, and since you can bring three of the beasts into battle with you, it's up to you to choose which one is best for the conflict at hand.

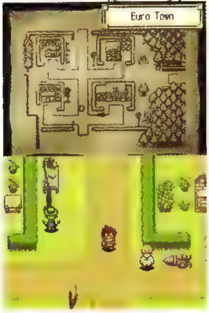
Outside of battle, you'll visit towns (where you can go shopping and talk to NPCs) and spend plenty of time traveling the world and exploring (which leads to random battles against the dinos of the Alpha Gang's Alpha Droids). As you're exploring you can activate your radar to find the location of nearby fossils, which are excavated using the DS's touch screen. By tapping on the screen you'll chip away pieces of rock, and you can clear away dust by blowing into the microphone. More than 100 dinosaurs are available for the finding, each with different stats, from favorites like Triceratops and Tyrannosaurus to critters you've probably never heard of, such as Eustreptospondylus and Muttaburrasaurus.

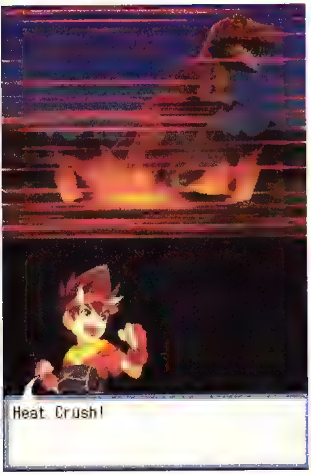
In addition to the globe-spanning story mode, you can battle, swap items, and trade dinosaurs over a local wireless hookup or through Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection, and true dinosaur enthusiasts can check out the game's encyclopedia mode for real info on all the creatures featured in the game. —CHRIS H.



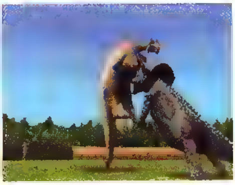
Never mess with a kid wearing Triceratops horns on his head.



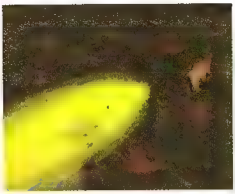


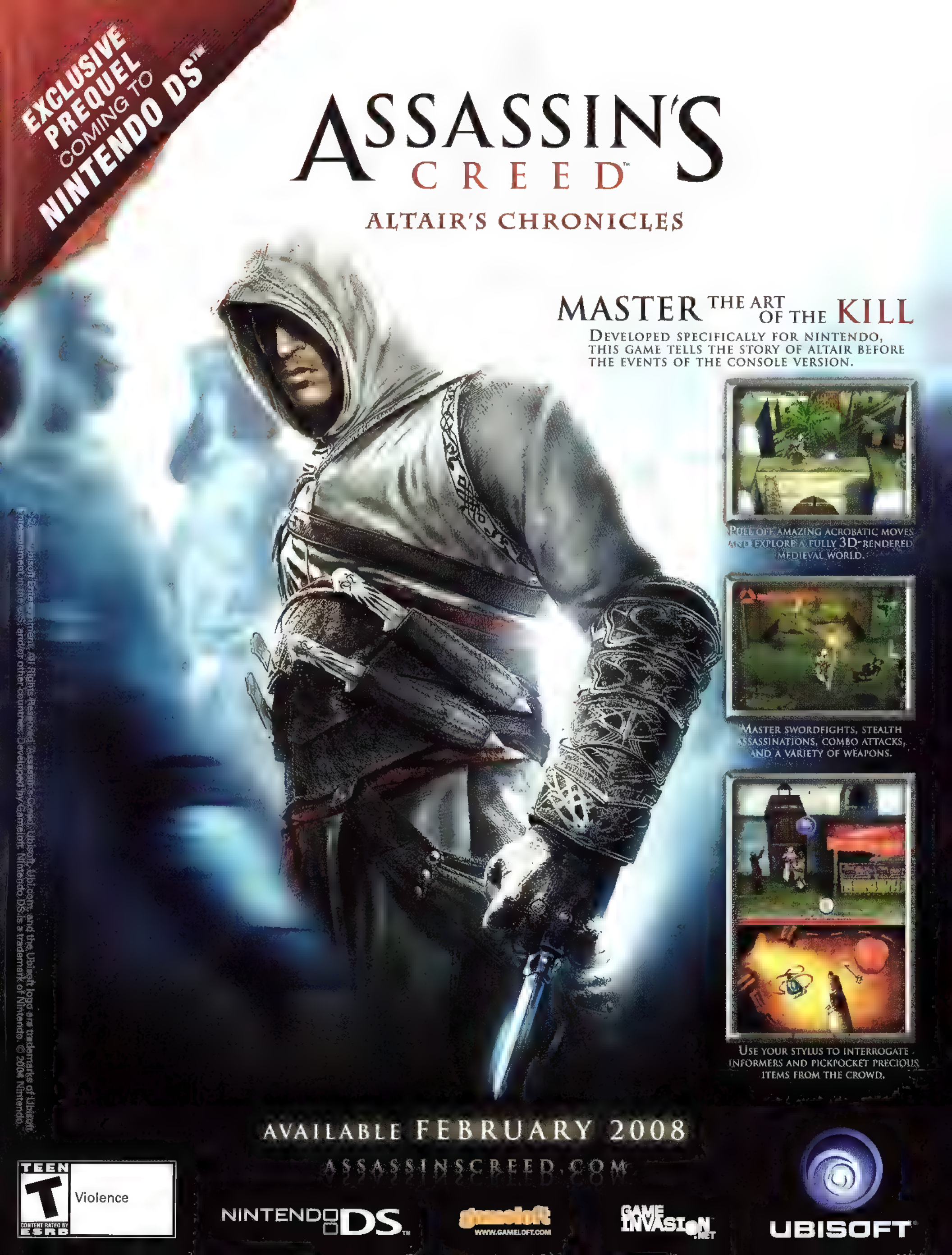


Heat Crush!



Horns gouge, tails swing, and giant lizards get knocked through the air during Dinosaur King's polygonal 3-D battle scenes.





EXCLUSIVE PREQUEL
COMING TO
NINTENDO DS™

ASSASSIN'S CREED™

ALTAIR'S CHRONICLES

MASTER THE ART OF THE KILL

DEVELOPED SPECIFICALLY FOR NINTENDO, THIS GAME TELLS THE STORY OF ALTAIR BEFORE THE EVENTS OF THE CONSOLE VERSION.

PULL OFF AMAZING ACROBATIC MOVES AND EXPLORE A FULLY 3D-RENDERED MEDIEVAL WORLD.

MASTER SWORDFIGHTS, STEALTH ASSASSINATIONS, COMBO ATTACKS, AND A VARIETY OF WEAPONS.

USE YOUR STYLUS TO INTERROGATE INFORMERS AND PICKPOCKET PRECIOUS ITEMS FROM THE CROWD.

AVAILABLE FEBRUARY 2008

ASSASSINSCREED.COM

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB
Violence
NINTENDO DS™
gameloft
WWW.GAMELOFT.COM
GAME INVASION .NET
UBISOFT

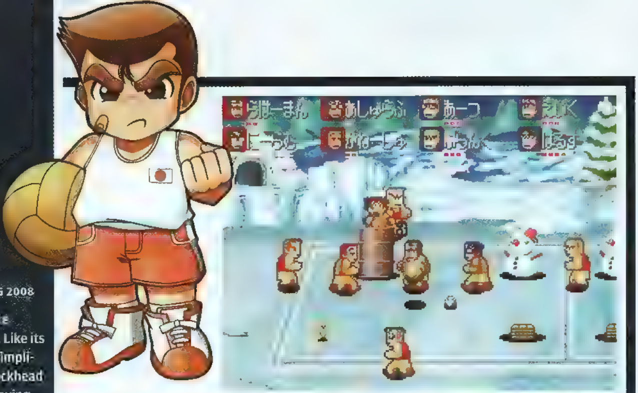
Ubisoft Entertainment. All Rights Reserved. Assassin's Creed, Ubisoft, Ubi.com, and the Ubisoft logo are trademarks of Ubisoft Entertainment in the U.S. and/or other countries. Developed by Gameloft. Nintendo DS is a trademark of Nintendo. © 2004 Nintendo.

Catch a Beating

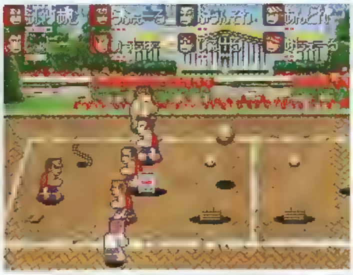
> SUPER DODGEBALL BRAWLERS

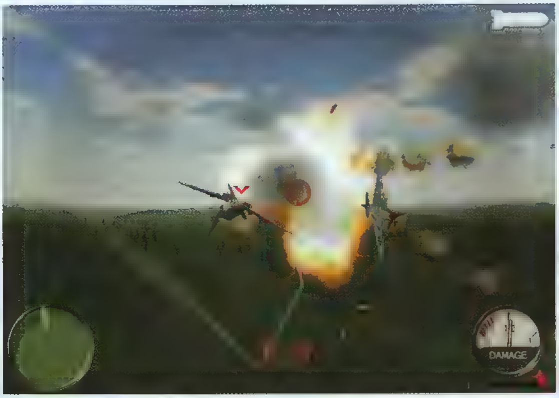
PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **AKSYS GAMES**
DEVELOPER: **ARC SYSTEM WORKS** • RELEASE: **SPRING 2008**

Recess will be all the rage when fan favorite Super Dodgeball debuts on the DS this spring. Like its predecessors on the NES and GBA, the game simplifies dodgeball into a single-ball sport with blockhead athletes. Two teams defend the ends of the playing field and take turns hurling the ball at each other. If you manage to hit an opponent without allowing him to catch the ball, you'll sap some of his energy and eventually knock him out of the game. The last team with players remaining wins. A running toss adds punch, and a perfectly timed run-and-release triggers a Super Throw, the type of which depends on the athlete and on whether he was on the ground or jumping when he released the ball. Additional strength comes through Nekketsu Bursts, which power up a predetermined team attribute (armor or jumping ability, for example). Though players can't cross the line that splits the field, their fists and feet can, allowing them to punch and kick opponents—thus the Brawlers tag on the title. —GEORGE S.



Nothing promotes international sportsmanship like the ability to smack your opponents upside the head.





There are a variety of mission objectives, from bombing runs to all-out dogfights.

Easy Flier

> WWII ACES

PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **DESTINEER**
DEVELOPER: **ARCADE MOON** • RELEASE: **FEBRUARY 2008**

Like Ubisoft's Blazing Angels, Destineer's WWII Aces presents arcadey flight combat in a World War II setting. But WWII Aces seems to be taking a more focused approach than Ubisoft's offering, emphasizing the actual act of flying over everything else. WWII Aces gives you a couple ways to fly, and neither is overly complicated. If you want the simplest experience the game offers, you can fly your heart out by tilting the sideways-held Wii remote. Those who want a little more complexity can add the nunchuk to the mix, using it to steer the plane while using the remote's Control Pad to perform maneuvers like barrel rolls. Either way, it's easy to take to the skies, whether you choose to be the British, the Russians, or the Germans. The graphics aren't exactly stunning, but the gameplay itself is solid, and the missions are supposedly based on real-life events, which should please all you history buffs out there. And the inclusion of both cooperative and competitive modes certainly doesn't hurt. —JUSTIN C.

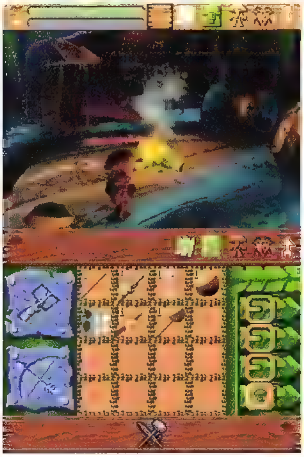
Sentient 'Shrooms

>MUSHROOM MEN: RISE OF THE FUNGI

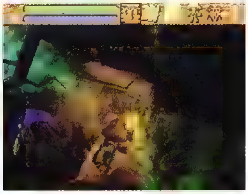
PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **GAMECOCK**
DEVELOPER: **ZEN STUDIOS/RED FLY**
RELEASE: **SUMMER 2008**

If there's one thing that Mario games have taught us, it's that mushrooms can be pretty powerful—a lesson that's taken to heart in Gamecock's Mushroom Men: Rise of the Fungi. As the game's story goes, a comet that crashes on Earth brings mushrooms, insects, and vegetation to life, giving rise to complex societies in the world's undergrowth. But these societies are full of danger; Rise of the Fungi kicks off as you find your village under attack by aggressive insects. Playing as a mushroom warrior, sage, or scout (each with varying stats), it's up to you to fend off the invaders, reclaim your stolen food supplies, and enlist the help of allies in a side-scrolling action-adventure-platformer that features 2-D design sensibilities and 3-D visuals. In addition to jumping, guarding, and using light and heavy attacks, your mushroom hero can rappel using a touch-screen-controlled grappling hook and unleash mighty spore powers (used for attacking, healing, and more) by drawing symbols. The touch screen is further employed to combine items and make new weapons, or you can use the second screen as a map. Throw in an experience system and customizable stats, and you've got one deep—and dank—DS title. —CHRIS H.

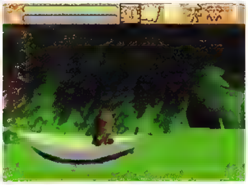
There's a fungus among us. Choose from three heroes: warrior, scout, or sage.

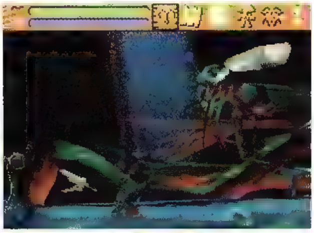


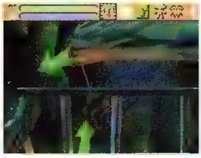
The DS's lower screen can be used in multiple ways—as a map, as your inventory, or to manage your stats. You can even swap the screens' positions by touching the arrow icon.



You're a small 'shroom in a human-sized world. Bugs and birds appear as mighty monsters.







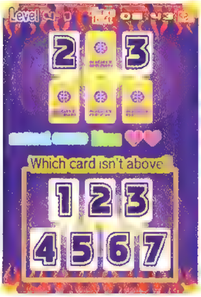
[Left] To use the grappling hook, simply touch the hook's icon and drag it to where you want to grapple.

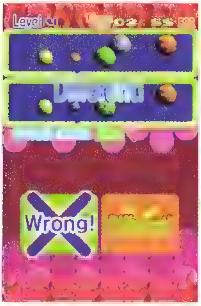
Mental Health

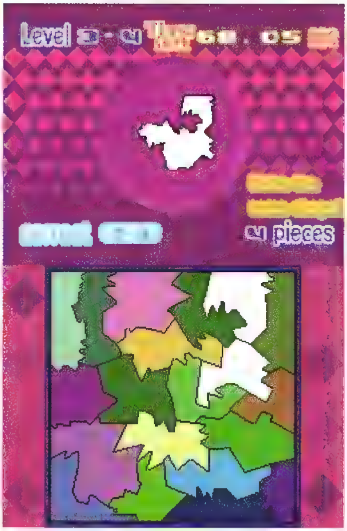
> BRAIN ASSIST

PLATFORM: DS • **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
DEVELOPER: SEGA • **RELEASE:** FEBRUARY 2008

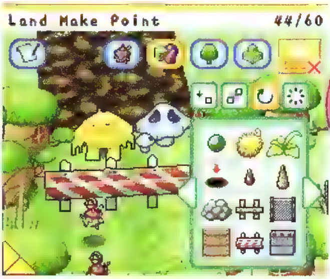
There are plenty of brain-training games on DS, but Sega's Brain Assist features one thing that other games in the genre don't: nurses. No floating disembodied professor heads here; your performance in Brain Assist is evaluated and commented on by six nurses, each with their own personalities and specialties (so each one will focus on a different aspect of your results). To be honest, we don't get it either, but regardless, Brain Assist features 10 minigames designed to test the creative, intuitive side of your noggin in a variety of ways. In Quick Numbers you'll be challenged to read series of numbers as they zoom across the screen at increasingly faster speeds; in Character Hunt you'll match up like symbols; in Pi and Thagoras you'll try to re-create a shape from pieces of a segmented square; and in Touch of Brilliance you'll watch colored tiles and identify which tiles flashed last (it's a lot harder than it sounds!). Up to four players can compete wirelessly, thus ensuring endless mockery of whoever scores lowest. —CHRIS H.







If you make too many mistakes, the game administers electric shocks through the touch screen. We kid! That only happens in Imagine Babyz.



Sure they look cute, but have you ever faced an army of ticked-off squirrels? Of course not. If you had, you wouldn't be here to read this, would you?

Growth Opportunity

> ECO-CREATURES: SAVE THE FOREST

PLATFORM: DS • **PUBLISHER:** MAJESCO
DEVELOPER: LIGHTWEIGHT CO./HEADLOCK CORPORATION
RELEASE: SPRING 2008

Veteran players may remember Captain Planet and the Toxic Avenger's NES efforts to clean up the world, but the environment has been a largely untapped issue in gaming as of late. Though Majesco's real-time strategy battler doesn't hit you over the head with its Earth-friendly message, the game's central conflict does task you with keeping an army of robots from plowing through a creature-filled forest. Missing-link protagonist Dorian delegates orders to three types of squirrelish forest-dwellers—the Ecolis, the Ecomon, and the Ecoby—each with unique abilities. The hero doesn't have the muscle to fight on his own, but he can conjure 10 types of spells to zap enemies and increase the strength of his wood-spirit army. You can also scratch out pollutants to reveal Mana crystals, and use the crystals to increase the abilities of Dorian's little buddies. Local wireless matches allow for single- or multicard play, and Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection lets you earn a global ranking. —GEORGE S.

Do you have a Green Thumb?

Puzzle de Harvest Moon is a fast-paced, highly addictive puzzle game where you grow and harvest crops competing against your favorite Harvest Moon characters!

Puzzle de
HARVEST
MOON
SEED
Select A Character
Karen
Works at the supermarket. Strong willed.
PETE
KAREN
GRAY
CLAIR
PETE
ELLI
CLIFF
POPURI

EVERYONE
E
Visit www.esrb.org for more ratings information.
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

NINTENDO DS™

www.natsume.com

NATSUME®
Serious Fun®

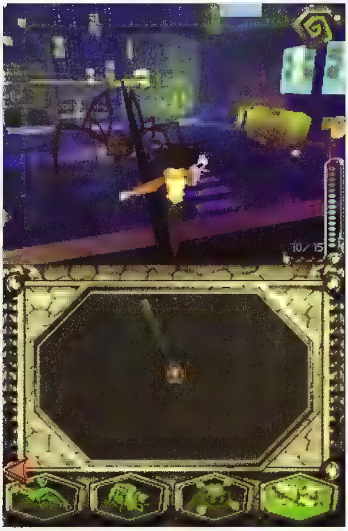
Licensed by Nintendo. Nintendo and Nintendo DS are trademarks of Nintendo. ©2001 Nintendo. Harvest Moon, Natsume and Serious Fun are registered trademarks of Natsume Inc. Puzzle de Harvest Moon is a trademark of Natsume Inc. ©2005 Natsume Inc. All Rights Reserved. Characters licensed from Marvelous Entertainment Inc. Developed by Platinum Egg. The ratings icon is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association.

A Bug's Death

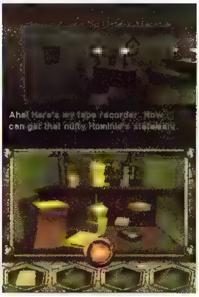
> INSECTICIDE

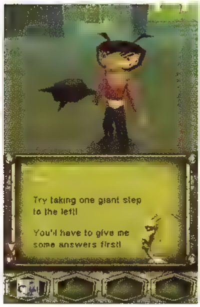
PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **GAMECOCK**
DEVELOPER: **CRACKPOT** • RELEASE: **SPRING 2008**

Being a police detective's a messy job—especially when you're a bug. In Insecticide, you're cast as Chrys Liszt, a young hotshot female officer in a world where bugs are the dominant species. As a member of the force's insecticide squad, it's your job to catch criminals and solve a mysterious murder using both gunplay and investigative skills. In the game's action stages you'll run, jump, and shoot your way through 3-D environments using weapons such as a mold-spore launcher and a nectar blaster to hunt down perpetrators. Radar on the bottom screen helps you keep track of enemies and objectives, and lock-on aiming is only a press of the A Button away. When you're not in hot pursuit of enemies, you'll participate in investigation sequences in which you'll use traditional controls in conjunction with the touch screen to interact with objects, acquire items, and talk to NPCs. By dragging possessions from your inventory onto characters' portraits, you can present items to fellow insects (like when you must bring your partner Roachy some moldy donuts and spoiled creamer before he'll help with your investigation). No one said being a bug was glamorous. —**CHRIS H.**

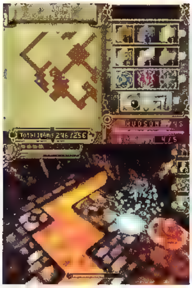


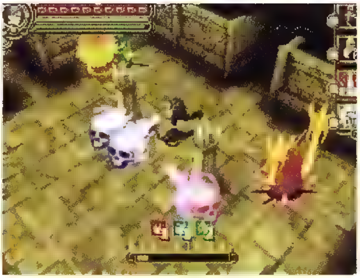
The radar in the action scenes comes in handy, but you don't need it to tell you that gigantic, ugly, red spiders are bad for your health.


Aha! Here's my tape recorder. Now I can get that nutty Hominie's statement.

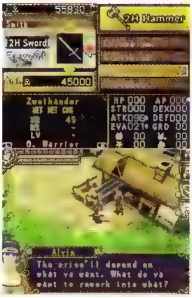

Try taking one giant step to the left!

You'd have to give me some answers first!

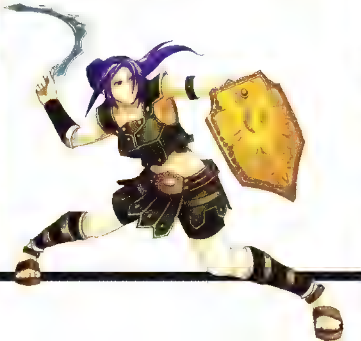




Finding one floating skull in a dungeon is bad enough, but three skulls? That's just madness.



The price'll depend on what ya want. What do ya want to rework into what?



What's in a Name?

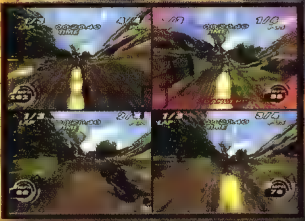
> DUNGEON EXPLORER: WARRIORS OF ANCIENT ARTS

PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **HUDSON**
DEVELOPER: **HUDSON** • RELEASE: **FEBRUARY 2008**

The sequel to Dungeon Explorer (one of the most appropriate titles ever coined), Dungeon Explorer: Warriors of Ancient Arts, delivers an abundance of monster-filled lairs for you to investigate as you play through an elaborate story of kings, heroes, and goblins. If you've played the Virtual Console game (or perhaps the original TurboGrafx-16 classic), you'll recognize the mixture of RPG level-building and real-time combat in the DS title, but you'll also see nearly 20 years of improvement on the dungeon-hack genre. More weapons, better class structure, and new features such as familiars and upgradable spells modernize the original concept. The DS helps it perform a few new tricks, as well—Warriors of Ancient Arts uses the lower screen to show all the action, and the top screen to display a map and a palette of items that you can select on the fly. There's also three-player co-op exploring for those too scared to go into the big dungeon alone. —**CHRIS SH.**

NITRO BIKE™
XTREMELY FAST. XTREMELY FUN.

Over 20 levels of nitro-charged gameplay



Challenge your friends in four-person split-screen or six-person online multiplayer

Nitrobike™ bowling – wipeouts encouraged!

AVAILABLE NOW

EVERYONE 10+
E 10+
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Mild Suggestive Themes
Violence

© 2007 Left Field Productions Inc. All Rights Reserved. Published and distributed by Ubisoft Entertainment. Nitrobike and Left Field Productions are trademarks of Left Field Productions Inc. and are used under license. Ubisoft, Ubi.com, and the Ubisoft logo are trademarks of Ubisoft Entertainment in the U.S. and/or other countries. TM and the Wii logo are trademarks of Nintendo. © 2006 Nintendo.

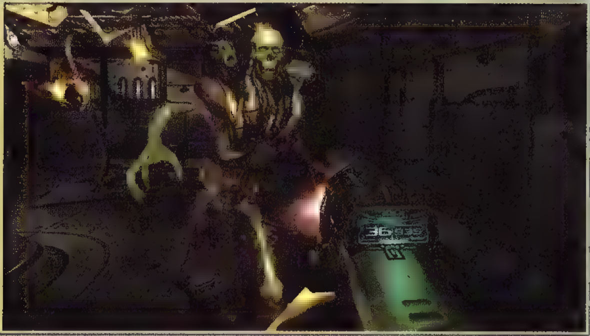
Wii

UBISOFT

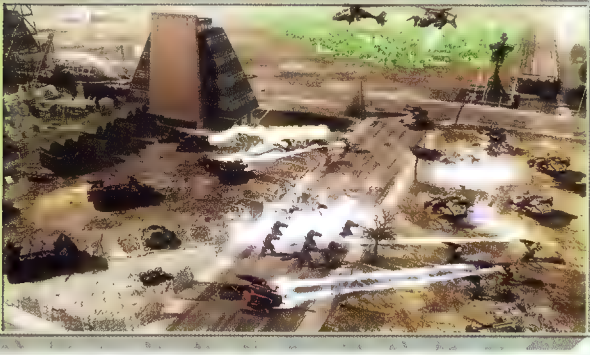
www.fileradar.net

AUTO TICKET

DEMOS



MODS



PATCHES

fileradar.

This is the premier, next-gen game links site, built for the community by the community. FileRadar not only puts the power of game file distribution in your hands, but lets you feedback to save everyone a load of time and grief. It takes the power of a site like Digg and applies it to the most essential part of games you're either actually playing or want to play:

The Download.

There are millions of places Net-wide to download from, and only FileRadar umbrellas them all while empowering you to tell each other not only which are the best files to get, but what are the fastest and easiest places to get them from. With a thriving community of informed gamers all networked together to either be the first to playtest a hot new game or enhance the games they already love, how can you go wrong?

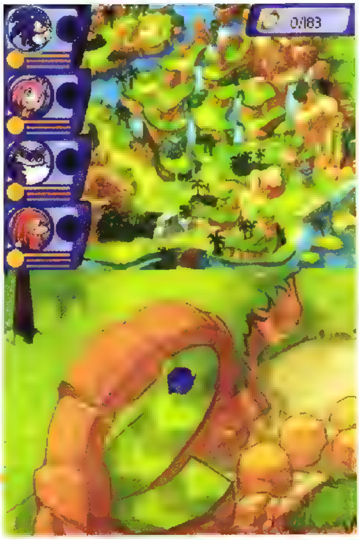
ou can't, and neither can FileRadar.net.

READY TO ROLE

Sonic and friends make their RPG debut in Sonic Chronicles: The Dark Brotherhood for the DS.

by [illegible]

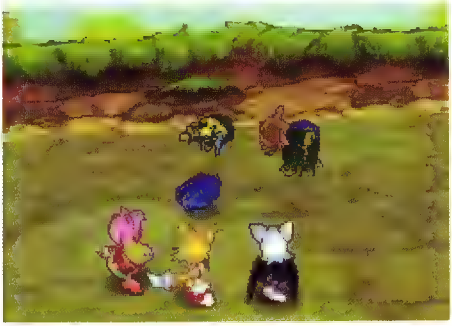
Back in September of 2006, acclaimed RPG developer BioWare announced that it was working on an untitled DS project, setting off a wave of speculation. Some predicted a follow-up to one of the company's previous efforts: a sequel to Jade Empire, perhaps, or another installment of Knights of the Old Republic. Others expected something totally new from the studio's maiden voyage into handheld development. But no one guessed that the Edmonton, Alberta-based company was actually teaming with Sega for a role-playing adventure starring Sonic the Hedgehog.



[Above] All Sonic games are required by international law to feature at least one loop-de-loop. And we wouldn't have it any other way.

The revelation of this unlikely marriage left the gaming community somewhat bewildered and very much intrigued, but Sega and BioWare have kept a tight lid on the project in the ensuing months. Determined to blow that lid off, we braved the harsh winter conditions of the Great White North for an exclusive first look at the newly christened Sonic Chronicles: The Dark Brotherhood.

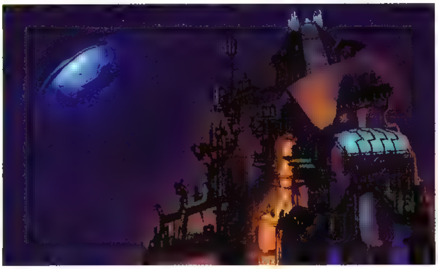
So how do you bring a character known for his blazing speed to a genre that typically moves at a deliberate pace? "Yeah, it's the first question that everybody asks," says lead designer Miles Holmes. "It's like, 'Sonic? Sonic is this and that. How do you merge that with an RPG?' The first thing that we have to appreciate is that, as an RPG, it's not going to be the absolute fastest Sonic experience. There are other Sonic games that will meet that expectation for people." Instead, BioWare's primary focus is on doing what it knows best—crafting a deep, involving RPG that tells a compelling story. That said, "We are going to incorporate those trademark elements of speed wherever they make sense," insists Holmes. "We want to evoke those feelings even if it's not as fast as other Sonic games." The result is very much BioWare and very much Sonic, offering something wholly new to fans of both.

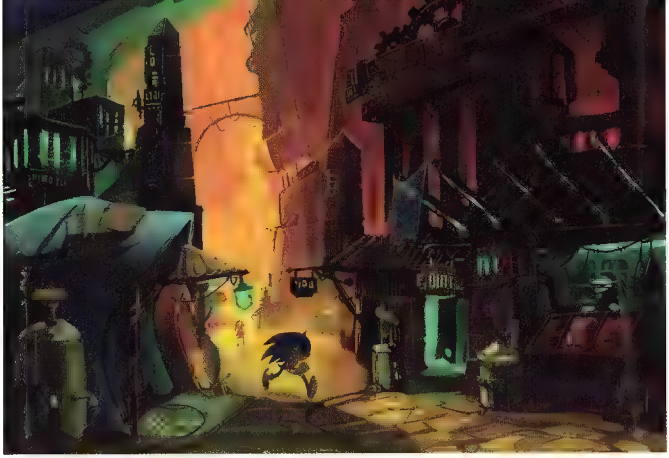


Animal Kingdom

In typical RPG fashion, our heroic hedgehog will split time between exploring the field map, chatting it up with locals, and engaging evildoers in combat. He won't have to go it alone, though. Up to three other characters can join the Blue Blur's party, and each possesses unique abilities that are crucial to overcoming certain challenges. To reach the other side of a gaping chasm, for instance, you'll need Tails to get airborne. If a boulder is blocking your path, you can call on Amy to smash it with her ludicrously huge mallet. "We'll have most of the characters that fans expect from the Sonic universe, as well as some additional characters that you might not expect," says project director Mark Darrah. Of the 11 team members you can recruit over the course of the game, Darrah was willing to reveal seven: Sonic, Tails, Amy, Knuckles, Rouge, Shadow, and Big the Cat. Regarding the latter, Darrah quickly adds, "Don't worry; we're looking at raising Big's IQ by a few dozen points."

You'll lead your party around the map via the touch screen, sim-





The second act takes place in a darker world than we're accustomed to seeing in Sonic games.

ply sliding the stylus in whichever direction you wish to move, and tapping certain objects to initiate context-sensitive interactions. Classic series elements like loop-de-loops and dash pads add a bit of spice (and some of that speed) to the exploration, and you'll be hard-pressed not to stop and gawk at the beautifully illustrated backgrounds. Unlike most 2-D RPGs, in which the environments are constructed from tile-based patterns, each map in Chronicles is one giant piece of art that's been drawn entirely by hand. It's an approach that requires a lot of hard work from the game's art staff, but the results are a joy to look at. Asked how the team arrived at this particular aesthetic, lead artist Joel MacMillan explains, "Visually, we wanted to reconnect with the original Sonic and try to rejuvenate that classic style. We felt he was represented best in 2-D."

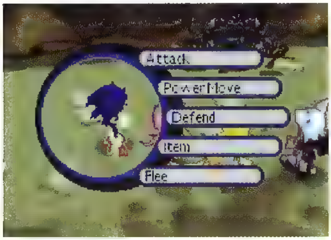
Navigating these worlds isn't just about sightseeing, however. From time to time, you'll come across obstacles that require your party to split up and work in tandem. A relatively simple example that we encountered early on tasks Sonic and friends with using a large crane to finish construction on a pipe. (Where's Mario when you need him?) One team member steps on a platform to activate the crane, another pulls a lever to lower the hook, and a third attaches the missing segment of pipe. The final member of your team can then rotate the crane and drop the pipe into place, allowing Sonic to dash on through and proceed to the next area.

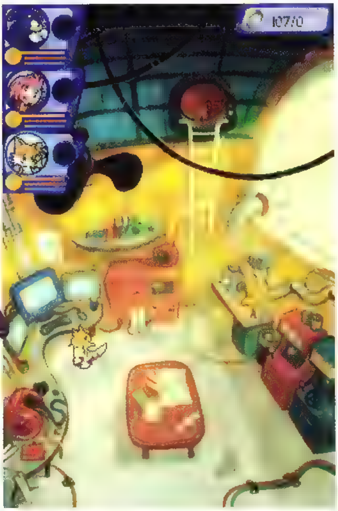
In keeping with series tradition, you'll also collect rings during your travels, but doing so grants a different reward than the usual 1-Up. "To bring out the traditional RPG elements, we felt that you need to have currency and you need to have shops," says Darrah. "So you'll be able to spend your rings on new items and equipment for your party." Sonic will be able to purchase new shoes, for example. One pair might allow him to move faster during combat, while another inflicts fire damage. No word yet on whether Big will have to buy those aforementioned IQ points.

Into the Fray

As you might expect, dispatching foes is a bit more methodical than in previous Sonic games. You'll see enemies approaching on the field map (let's hear it for the gradual extinction of random encounters), and should they come in contact with you, the game cuts to a 3-D battle screen. (The developers decided to go the polygonal route with combat because it allows for a more-dynamic depiction of the fisticuffs.) Skirmishes are menu-driven and turn-based, though the round doesn't play out until after you've selected commands for the entire party. "That way," remarks Darrah, "you've got that nice tactical element, but all of the action is concentrated at the end to give combat a feeling of speed." And depending on their attributes, some characters can perform multiple actions per round, leading to some impressively frenetic battle sequences.

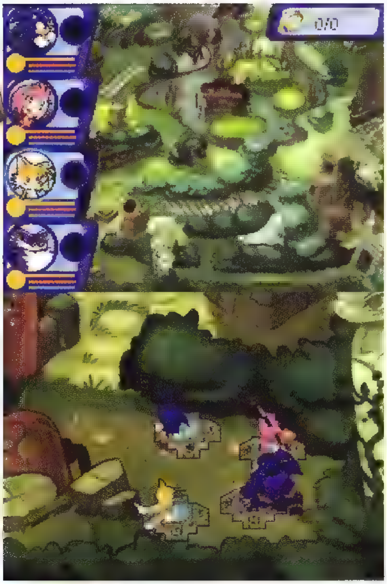
In discussing the team's overarching philosophy behind the battle system, Holmes tells us, "The ultimate thing I wanted to see out of combat was that it be quick-paced. Even if it was strategic in terms of turn-based input, it should be presented very



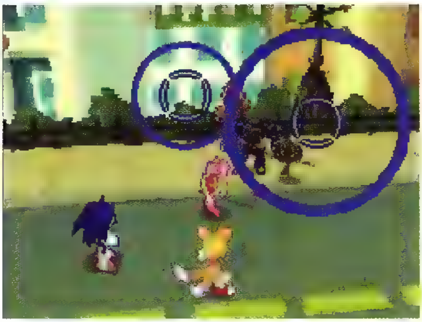


Tails' workshop serves as your group's headquarters. You'll need to return here when you want to swap out party members.

quickly. So after you plot your moves, it all happens very fast. You see Sonic moving the way he should be moving." The team played around with the idea of a real-time system, but it failed to deliver what they felt was important. "Paradoxically, turn-based combat actually lets us make Sonic faster than we would have been able to do with a real-time system," explains Darrah. "With a completely real-time system that uses a party, you become limited in terms of what the player can keep track of. If you have Sonic moving superfast and three other characters all doing their thing, it overwhelms the player."



[Right] Hopefully Big doesn't break that ancient pressure switch. [Below] Fans of Elite Beat Agents should have no trouble pulling off this Power Move.



Vanquishing your opponents isn't a strictly passive affair, however. Each member of your party can perform special Power Moves that require you to execute touch-screen commands for maximum efficacy. In one example, circles close in on your target, and you have to tap them in order à la Elite Beat Agents. If you're successful, the attack could cause additional damage or inflict a status effect, such as stunning your foe. "We wanted to have the real-time elements in there to keep the player engaged," says Holmes. "Take Final Fantasy, for example. They have some pretty spectacular animations for certain spells and things, but they tend to disengage the player after a while because it's not interactive. It's just a canned animation. So to have the real-time input, we figured that's a way to do these moves and still keep the player engaged because you have to be paying attention. It was something that was obviously influenced by the Mario & Luigi games. It was an idea that worked really well with their combat."

Certain party members can also work together to create devastating combination attacks. If you have Sonic and Tails in your party, for instance, they can team up to perform a Blue Bomber, in which Tails grabs the Blue Blur, takes to the skies, and drops his hedgehog ordnance on a group of enemies. Darrah claims that there will be 40 or so such combinations in the final game, some of which involve three or even four characters. You must choose wisely when to use them, however; both Power Moves and combination attacks will deplete your Fatigue Points. Once a character's FP tally is at zero, he will be limited to normal attacks.

Other strategic choices are involved in deciding whom to put in your party. You can switch members in and out at any time by returning to your headquarters, and each character has different strengths and weaknesses. At the beginning of the game, Sonic is the only one able to perform two actions per round, but his attacks don't do as much damage as, say, Knuckles'. Tails, on the other hand, is more of a support character. His Power Moves include things like Tinker, which weakens or temporarily incapacitates robotic enemies.

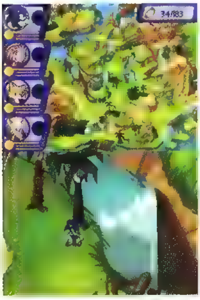
Of course, a trademark of BioWare RPGs is that you can customize your characters as you see fit. When a member of your party levels up, you get to choose which attributes to improve. Naturally, each character starts off with certain tendencies, but if you want to make Rouge superstrong over time or focus on increasing Big's speed, that's your prerogative. You'll also receive points with which to purchase new Power Moves or upgrade existing ones (which causes them to deal more damage and can even add side effects such as making an opponent dizzy). When you attain certain levels, your party's field map abilities will improve, as well, giving you access to new areas. To reach a treasure chest atop an especially high cliff, for instance, you'll need Tails' level-two flight ability. That means you can stick with the same party of your favorite characters if you wish, but neglecting the rest of your group carries the risk of missing out on certain rewards.

A Hero's Tale

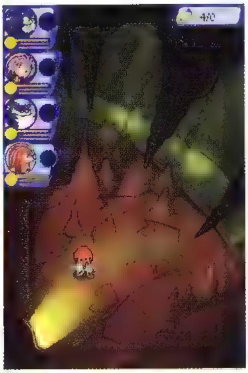
Perhaps above all else, BioWare is known for telling great stories, and the studio hopes to continue that tradition with The Dark Brotherhood. "That was a big deal for me—to have an impactful story that interfaced with previous stories that Sonic has been through," says Holmes. "It was really cool going through the back history of the property. There's a lot more there than you might have expected. I also noticed that they left a lot of loose ends that we could tie into. It enabled us to bring a new story but also reach back a little bit and have something that the real fans could connect with what they've seen before. It sort of explains a few things that they might not have had an answer to. And, of course, if we're doing a new Sonic game, we want to leave our mark on it as well by adding a new character here and a new location there. But the cool thing is being able to plug those [new elements] into existing Sonic material. They may be new, but they actually fit into stuff that's been there all along." Darrah adds, "The goal for us is to create something that actually builds on the existing franchise as opposed to something that feels like it's just sort of stapled onto the side."

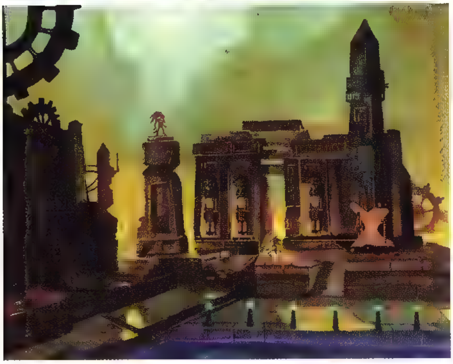
Our tale begins with Sonic on a well-deserved vacation. Having foiled Dr. Eggman's latest scheme two years prior, the heroic hedgehog decided to travel the world he's saved on so many occasions and simply enjoy the sights. His sabbatical comes to an abrupt end, however, when he receives an urgent message from Tails. It seems Knuckles has been kidnapped by a mysterious group called the Marauders, and that six of the seven legendary Chaos Emeralds have gone missing as well. Sonic quickly returns home, and his latest adventure is off and running.

So who's behind this new threat? "At the beginning of the game, it looks like Eggman is the main villain," states Darrah. "But as the story progresses, you'll



[Above] When you're outdoors, the top screen will display a map of the area.





Sonic's New Friends

We chat with BioWare co-founders Dr. Ray Muzyka and Dr. Greg Zeschuk about working with Sega, getting into handheld development, and embracing morbidly obese felines.

NINTENDO POWER: Thanks for taking the time to meet with us today.

RAY MUZYKA: This is a great honor. Seriously, we're thrilled to be in Nintendo Power.

Wow, thanks! We're delighted to finally be able to cover one of your games. I guess the most obvious question to start with is, why did BioWare decide to get into handheld development?

RM: We love handheld games, and we're excited about bringing some of the things that BioWare is known for—like story and character development—onto the handheld space. It's as simple as that. And we're big fans of Sonic. That's a big part of it as well, frankly. I've got my Sega Genesis signed by Yuji Naka plugged into my HDTV. It's pretty big and pixelated, but it still looks great and it plays great. We love handhelds, we love Sonic, and we'd love to bring some of the things that BioWare is known for with story and character and RPGs onto that space.

How did the project come about? Did Sega approach BioWare or vice versa?

GREG ZESCHUK: You know, that's funny; we've been trying to remember how it happened. We know [Sega President] Simon Jeffrey very well. He worked with us on Knights of the Old Republic when he was at LucasArts.

RM: I think we were just talking to him about various possibilities for working together. We're friends who have worked together in the past. We talk periodically, and I think we were just talking about our passion for Sonic at one point. We thought it would be cool to do something together and see what we could make happen. And it just kind of developed from there. It was kind of mutual.

GZ: Yeah, I don't think there was one specific event. We chat with him from time to time, and we were mutually interested in making a really high-end handheld project. That was the other thing that was actually very important to us. We play a ton of handheld games, and generally, most of the high-quality handheld stuff is coming out of Japan. There isn't a lot of North American triple-A handheld development going on. There are a lot of solid games, but nothing that really stands out. So we thought it was a great chance to team up and do that.

Why did you choose the DS for the project?

RM: In some ways, we think that the DS is just more attuned to the style of game we make at BioWare. It seems to fit the RPG space better. With the two screens, you can actually show RPG stats and stuff that's appropriate for the genre. It enables different types of gameplay; the fact that you can touch the screen, the fact it has all kinds of other cool capabilities. It seems like it's a better system, in a way, for the things we do. We try to support a range of platforms. Different systems are good for different types of games, and we might support other systems in the future. But for this game, we think the DS is perfect. It's perfectly attuned for a Sonic RPG.

Do you have to approach handheld development differently than with a console game?

GZ: It's very refreshing for us. We've been doing this for almost 15 years now. If anything, building on the DS is not unlike what we did years ago on the PC. You have a smaller team—a tight-knit group—and the progress you can make in a short amount of time is incredible. The biggest thing, and Mark always emphasizes this to us when he's looking for folks to help on the project, is that every single person counts. Every single person is important.

Obviously you guys have worked on licensed properties before with Star Wars and Dungeons & Dragons. But is it different working with an existing game license like Sonic?
RM: You always start with something really great. Not just from a marketing side, but also from the development side, where you have the body of information around the characters and how they interact and the relationships and the world and the universe. You're able to bring all that to bear. And the Sonic franchise is incredibly rich and detailed when you start looking at all the history there. There's a lot of stuff there, and it's a powerful starting point.
GZ: The characters already have relationships with each other, and it's interesting.
RM: We were delighted when we started looking into the license and saw how rich it was. We were fans of the license to begin with, but we didn't realize there was this big candy store of stuff that we could take from. And Sega's been very supportive of us developing within that universe; trying to bring new things to it and really innovate with where we take the property.
GZ: We want to flesh out all of those characters. Ones you've known just a little bit; you're gonna get to know them a lot better. Like Big the Cat . . .

That's actually my least favorite character in the Sonic universe. [Laughs]
GZ: What?! This interview's over! [Laughs]

I'm sorry.
RM: We're gonna show you a whole different side of Big the Cat. [Laughs]
GZ: He's very sensitive. He has a big heart. But you don't have to put him in your party if you don't like him.
RM: It's all about choice, right? That's a big part of BioWare games. It's allowing the player to customize their experience. I think it's great that we actually have players who prefer different styles of gameplay and different relationships and different teams. We're going to facilitate that.
GZ: Yeah, you could purposefully leave Big the Cat languishing back at the base and have him miss out on all the fun. [Laughs]

How do you go about balancing what makes the series what it is while simultaneously trying new things?
MARK DARRAH (PROJECT DIRECTOR): It's really important that you stay true to the essence of Sonic. You have to maintain the feeling of speed and the attitude that underlies the character. That being said, you obviously have to make certain gameplay choices to tell a stronger story. Sonic has to stop every once in a while and have a conversation with somebody, which is something he hasn't done before. But at the heart, it still has to feel like Sonic.
RM: You still have to innovate, too. You have to exceed fans' expectations. They're gonna look at it and say, "Yeah, it feels like Sonic, but it's new and different."
GZ: That's the fun thing about the depth of the universe. It gives us all the tools to do that fairly easily. The relationships between the characters mean something. They'll mean something in this game. That's one dimension of the franchise that hasn't really been explored.
RM: Our mission is to deliver these great stories at BioWare, but our vision, even beyond that, is to make you feel an emotional bond with the characters. To make the player feel something. And I think we can do that with this property. We can do some things that haven't been done before. That's why it's such an honor to be working on this franchise; to be able to, with reverence, take it in some exciting new directions.

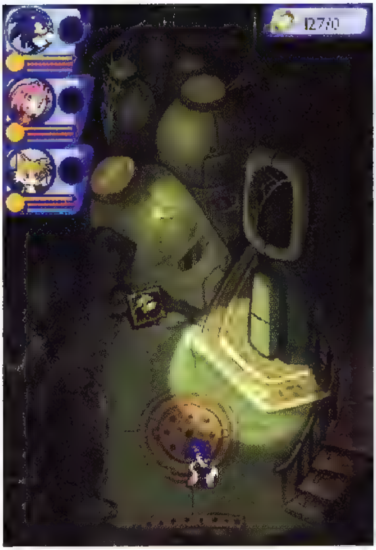
BioWare is renowned for RPGs. Do you foresee the company continuing to focus on that genre, or are there other types of games that you'd like to tackle?
GZ: We actually have done action games. In fact, our first game was more of an action game, as was MDK 2. But we see "RPG" as a really broad description. More so than that, we look at story-driven games as our foundation. Take something like Mass Effect. It has sort of the underpinnings of an RPG, but in front of it is a very cinematic experience. And it has a pretty action-oriented combat system. Jade Empire was much the same way. Each one has unique facets. One of our goals is to try to push that story-driven game into interesting spaces. And that's one of the reasons for this game, really. We see it as a way to expand the world in a way that we think the players would enjoy and have never experienced before. It's sort of a BioWare signature—that story-driven perspective—and we think that can merge well with just about anything.

"Building on the DS is not unlike what we did years ago on the PC. You have a smaller team—a tight-knit group—and... every single person counts. Every single person is important." *-Greg Zeschuk*

What are your thoughts on Wii, and have you given much consideration to developing on the platform?
RM: We haven't announced anything on it yet, but we are very excited about it. We're excited about both of the Nintendo platforms. We think they both really innovate and do things differently than the other platforms. There's a tremendous strength to that if you customize your experience to what each platform brings. The touch screen, the wireless capabilities, and the dual screens on the DS—you can really do some innovative things with those. And the same is very much true for Wii. So while we haven't announced anything on that front yet, we are excited about the platform. The only thing we wouldn't do, is we wouldn't just take one of our games and port it in a way that's not appropriate and customized for the platform. That's not what BioWare's about. We take a property and we think, "What would be really great to do with that property? What would be really exciting? What's appropriate for gameplay? How can we take that further and combine it with what BioWare's known for?" And then combine that in turn with the platform you're working on. How do you make sure your audience is getting what they need? We think about all those things.
GZ: It would have to be the right game. Obviously, the biggest strength for Wii is the way you control characters. There's also a really unique social aspect. Split-screen has always been fun on other platforms, but there's nothing like playing together on Wii.

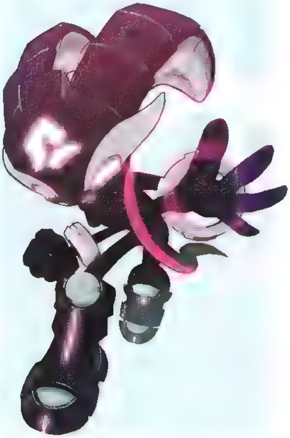
Thanks again for your time. Any final words for our readers?
RM: For us, this is a big thing. We're not going into DS development lightly. We're going into it because we're fans. Everyone on the team is. Greg and I are.
GZ: We travel a lot and we're playing it all the time.
RM: Yeah. Honestly, one of the reasons we're on DS is because that's the system we take with us when we travel. If we're gonna take a handheld system, that's generally the one we carry with us. So it's only natural; if you're a fan of that system, it's the one you would want to develop for and the one where you're always thinking, 'How could I put a BioWare RPG onto this system?' It's just got so much potential. It's an honor for us to be working on DS. And it's a big honor, seriously, for us to be in Nintendo Power. We read it all the time.

"Our vision...is to make you feel an emotional bond with the characters. To make the player feel something. And I think we can do that with this property." *-Ray Muzyka* realize that it's somebody else. A new, darker villain." That's not to say Sonic's arch nemesis doesn't have a role to play. According to Holmes, "Eggman's been relegated to comic relief for a while now, but we really wanted to build him back up as a credible adversary. And there's a twist centered around Eggman that goes back to the franchise's early days that Sonic fans will not expect."


The painted backgrounds do a fantastic job of giving each location is own distinct look.

Friend or Foe?

One of the new characters Sonic and friends will encounter on their journey is a mysterious warrior named Shade (pictured below in her battle armor). We don't know much about her, but BioWare claims that she'll play a very important role in the game.

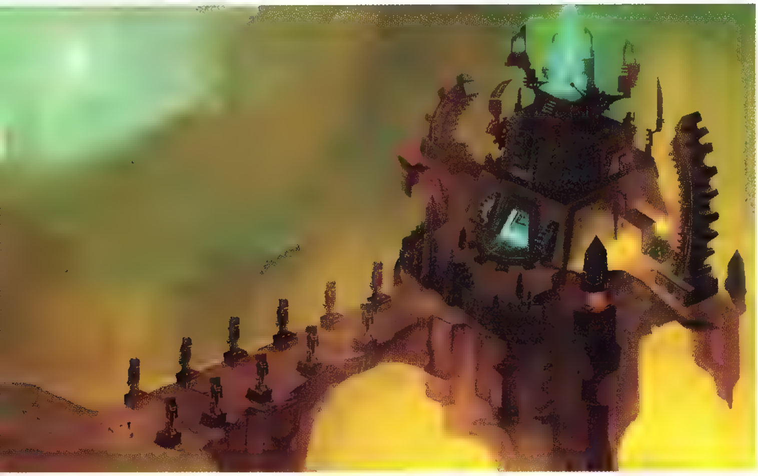


Chronicles is divided into two acts. The first takes place in familiar Sonic locales such as Green Hill Zone, Mystic Ruins, and Emerald Town. Longtime followers of the series will get a kick out of seeing its most memorable stages reimagined in RPG form, and the nostalgia needle really goes off the dial when you hear the music. The soundtrack features a number of remixed themes from previous games, and serves as a reminder of just how infectious the music was in those early Genesis installments. The developers wouldn't show us anything from act two, but they divulged that it takes place in a parallel universe, and that the overall tone of the game gets much darker in the second half.

Though key moments will play out via fully animated cut-scenes, the primary vehicle moving the story forward is the interactive dialogue. As in previous BioWare games, you can choose how your hero responds during conversations. "The default response will just be the purest Sonic response possible," Darrah says. "He just wants to cut to the chase and get going. Alternately, you can ask questions to dig into more detail, or in some cases, give a response with a bit of extra attitude." The "attitude" responses can actually lead to some pretty humorous exchanges, and the writing as a whole seems to live up to BioWare's usual high standards. "We really want to flesh out these iconic characters and help fans get to know them better," shares Darrah.

In case you feel like taking a break from the main quest now and then, certain characters will ask you to complete optional side missions. Doing so will earn you extra experience points, and, on occasion, special items or equipment. "These diversions give players a little more freedom to do what they want, and help open up the game's world a bit more," asserts Darrah.

Judging from what we've seen thus far, Chronicles' melding of old-school platforming mascot with prominent RPG developer could prove the best experimental merger since chocolate and peanut butter. It's obvious that the team has a lot of passion for the project, and they're clearly determined to do right by the old hedgehog. As Holmes puts it, "He's just a great character, and he's been part of the game culture for so long now. You'd be crazy not to have a fondness for the series." We'll all get a chance to feel the love when Sonic Chronicles rolls into stores this fall.



KOEI®
www.koei.com

Produced by
OMEGA-Force

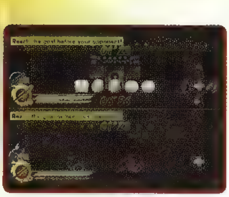
THE SYMBOL OF THE SAMURAI

SAMURAI WARRIORS®
戦国無双
KATANA

AVAILABLE NOW

Master eight awesome samurai weapons including spear, war hammer, bow and arrow and more!

Fire projectiles to eliminate enemy ninja. Shake the Wii Remote™ and Nunchuk to run past deadly traps.



Eight different mini-games for two-players. Save your score and record with your Mii™.

TEEN
T
Mild Language
Violence
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

WWW.KOEI.COM/KATANA

DOLBY®
PRO LOGIC II

Wii

Samurai Warriors and the KOEI logo are registered trademarks of KOEI Co., Ltd. ©2007-2008 KOEI Co., Ltd. All rights reserved. The Wii logo is a trademark of Nintendo. © 2006 Nintendo. Dolby, Pro Logic, and the double-D symbol are trademarks of Dolby Laboratories. All other trademarks are properties of their respective owners.

NEWS
PRODUCTS
WEATHER
RESORTS
COMMUNITY

Everything snowboarding...

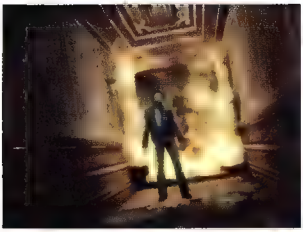
Finder File Edit View Go Window Help
Mon 10:23 AM
Future Snowboarding - Snowboards, Snowboarding, Snowboarders, Snowboard Gear, Snowboard Reviews, Snowboard News, Snowboard Community
FUTURE SNOWBOARDING
HOME
BOARD FINDER
NEWS
FORUM
ABOUT US
Dave Kelleher
FIND A SNOWBOARD
OUR BOARD CADDY
TONY HAWK'S
LATEST NEWS
Jackson Hole Honors Doug Coombs
Aspen/Snowmass Celebrate 60 Years!
IN THE MAGAZINE
FROM THE FORUM
Video of the YEAR
CLICK TO VIEW TRAILER

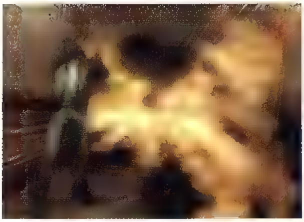
futuresnowboarding.com

WELCOME TO THE DARK SIDE

The series that started the survival horror genre now redefines it with Alone in the Dark on Wii.

BY JUSTIN CHENG





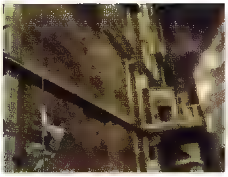
When you think of survival horror, one series immediately springs to mind: Resident Evil. But while Capcom's survival horror franchise popularized the genre, it was a little PC game called Alone in the Dark that started it all.

A decade and a half later, publisher Atari and developer Hydravision—who's making the Wii and PlayStation 2 versions of the game based on developer Eden's PS3 and Xbox 360 versions—have brought Alone in the Dark back for a fifth time. Now there's a new story penned by acclaimed author Lorenzo Carcaterra (see the "Writer's Block" sidebar), a new modern-day setting, and a new focus on all-out action.

Man of Action

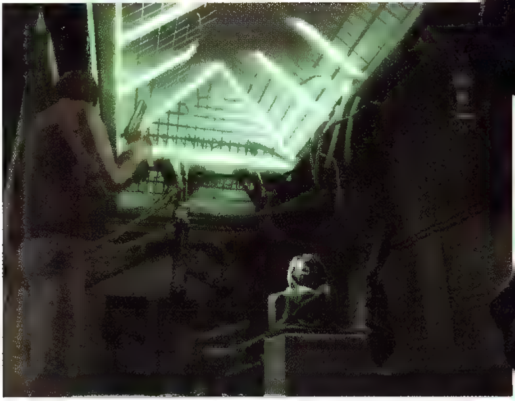
Edward Carnby is a man out of time. He's been transported from the 1920s into 21st-century New York City, but he doesn't know how. Our first experience with the game involved Edward waking up in a strange room where men are talking about him. Everything's blurred, but by quickly pressing down on the Control Pad, Edward blinks and his vision clears, if only momentarily. As we learned from the developers, this maneuver plays a larger role later in the game—for example, when Edward's vision is blurred due to being poisoned.

While moments like these are in first-person perspective, you switch to the more familiar third-person view when the game gets a bit

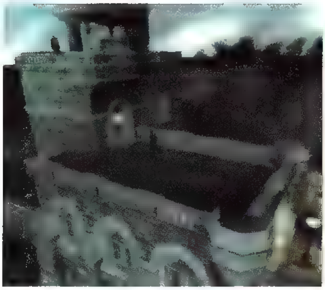


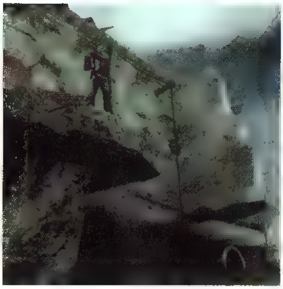
Remember: Large random wires can be useful when trying to escape from a burning building.

While the first part of Alone in the Dark is about Edward Carnby's exciting adventures on this building, the majority of the game actually takes place in and around Central Park.



There's something strange in the neighborhood, and it seems that Edward is the only one who can stop it. Good thing he's familiar with modern-day weaponry.





more action-heavy—and we don't mean just combat. The developers have taken a much more action-focused approach than in the series' previous installments; think *24* or *Die Hard*. As strange as that sounds for a survival horror game, they are apt comparisons: Like John McClane or Jack Bauer, Edward is practically a one-man army, fighting to survive in a New York ravaged by some unknown supernatural force. The first level we saw had Edward helping people escape from a burning building. At one point, he uses a fire hose to rappel down an elevator shaft, which definitely echoes McClane in the original *Die Hard*.

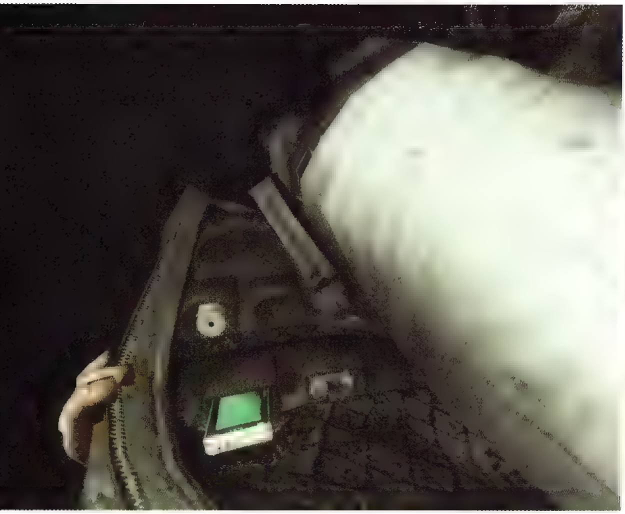
Atari describes the game as "episodic," though the entire game is included on the disc. What they mean is that each chapter ends on a cliffhanger, keeping you engrossed in the adventure. Explains Lionel Fumery, a producer at Hydravision, "To bring a higher level of excitement, Eden took inspiration for the game structure from TV series like *24* and *Lost* for the game design, where you're gripped by a tight dynamic of action, plot twists, character revelation, and cliffhangers. Those TV shows have directly influenced the structure of the game to give the same kind of dynamic in the gameplay."

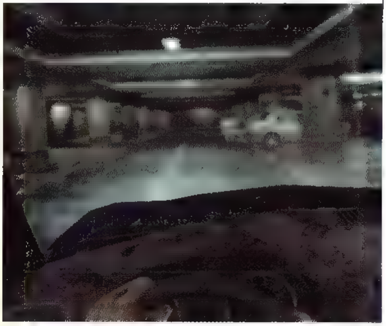
Immersed in Darkness

At one point Edward has to shimmy on the outside of a building as chunks of it rain down on him. This is a far cry from the haunted mansion the protagonist investigated before, and it gives a new meaning to the "survival" part of "survival horror." All of this requires the use of both the Wii remote and the nunchuk, sometimes in new ways. "We have concentrated on the control system, with lots of different control schemes depending on the context and actions," says Fumery. "The result is a really cool mixture of gameplay and a very realistic way to control and manipulate objects using the Wii controllers which has not been done in this way before." The most evident example is lifting the nunchuk to jump, making it a more active and immersive experience than simply pressing a button.

In fact, immersion is one of the most important aspects of Alone in the Dark. Fumery explains, "Immersion is key to creating emotions in the player—that's to say emotional investment and complete focus on the experience. We've used lots of techniques, including an incredible musical score which will stay with you long after you've left the game, the powerful ambience created by the lighting, the in-jacket real-time inventory, lack of health and ammo bars, and the life system which adds an extra level of stress with the player able to see the injuries on Carnby's body with a corresponding reduction in physical ability as the wounds worsen." Instead of going to an inventory screen, you can see all the items in Edward's many pockets. You can even combine items from there, such as using tape and an aerosol can to make a sticky bomb that you can shoot when enemies approach.

Edward has an amazing jacket with many, many pockets. This is the game's inventory system, where you can see all of the stuff you've collected and make weapons by combining seemingly innocuous items together.





Yes, it's a survival horror game, but you can do some driving, too. Use both the Wii remote and nunchuk to steer.

There are multiple ways to go about everything, especially the game's many puzzles, just as there are multiple ways to solve problems in real life. For instance, maybe you need to use your flashlight but it's out of batteries. You could get creative and put part of a wooden chair into a fire to create a torch.

Fear Itself

The more immersed you are, the more the developers can play on your emotions to ratchet up the intensity and anxiety. This series is, after all, about making you afraid. "Once we've got the player's full attention we can manipulate their emotions more easily, which is when suggested fear comes into play," Fumery says. "The idea of what could be behind a door or hiding in a dark corner is much more powerful than just some bad guy trying to hit you. On one hand this drives the player forward to find out what's next, and on the other makes every step a battle over the fear of what danger might be waiting round the next corner."

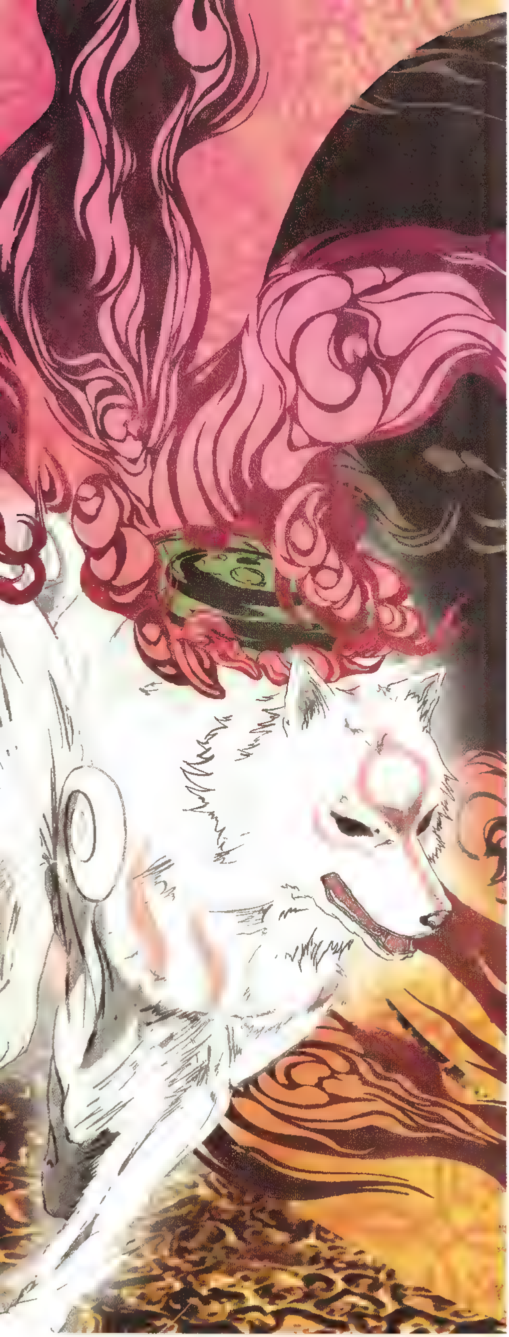
And many more dangers than just crumbling buildings abound in Alone in the Dark. Monsters and other things that go bump in the night have consumed New York City, though Atari remains mum about what kind of creatures we can expect to see, revealing only some man-eating batlike beasts and a black ooze monster that hates light. Central Park seems to be at the center of it all, and is the setting for most of the game. "Central Park is a very evocative location, which is familiar to nearly everybody whether they've visited or just seen it in films and TV shows," explains Fumery. "Taking a familiar location and twisting it with your own version of reality is often more interesting than creating somewhere new, and helps us create a more unsettling and high-impact experience. From a game-design point of view, Central Park is a gift. It's a vast city within a city with its own police precinct, museum, zoo, boating lake, castle, plus some very wild areas that even seasoned New Yorkers rarely visit. This gave us lots of inspiration for things the player could do in the game." To make your trek through Central Park a little easier, there are a few drivable cars strewn about. Some require a hot-wiring minigame to start, then you hold the Wii remote and nunchuk like the three and nine positions on a steering wheel.

So far, Alone in the Dark on Wii holds a lot of promise—more than some of the prior iterations in the series, and definitely much more than the atrocious Uwe Boll film adaptation. If the developers' ambitions are fully realized, we should be in for a frighteningly good spring.

Dark Scribe

Author Lorenzo Carcaterra knows New York. He was born and raised in Hell's Kitchen, was a reporter for *The New York Daily News* in 1976 and is most famous for writing the *New York Times* bestseller *Sleepers*. He's the ideal person to write the New York-centric Alone in the Dark. Hydravision producer Lionel Fermery explains. "The story was actually written entirely at Eden; they brought in Lorenzo for his major league professional script writing skills and to bring a New York edge to the dialogue, as he's a native New Yorker himself. He was great to work with, and although he found it tricky working without many visuals to go on, he got used to it. He found it quite similar to working on a TV script in some ways—a collaborative effort with lots of back-and-forth."

You can interact with just about everything, and there are multiple ways to solve puzzles.

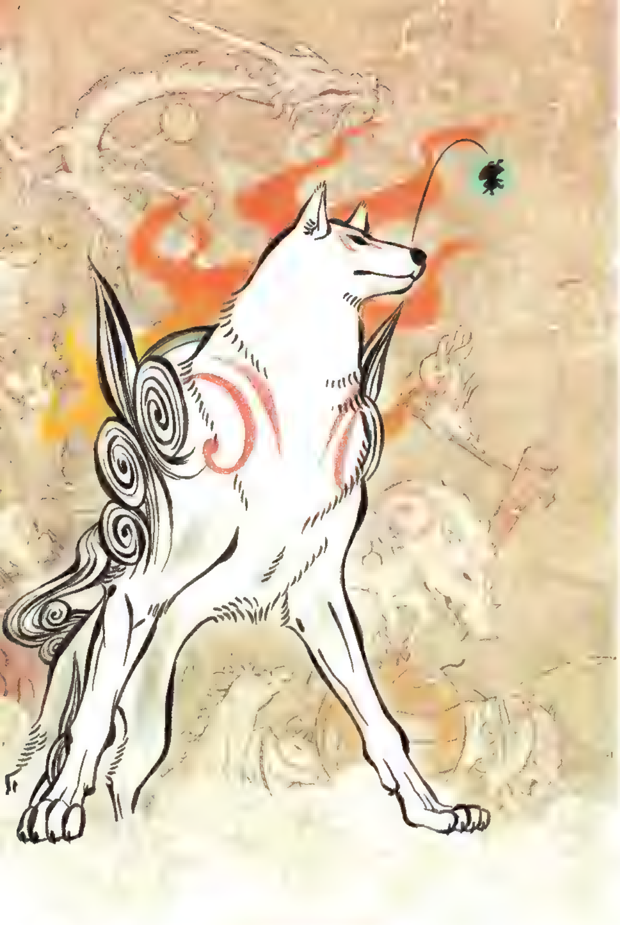


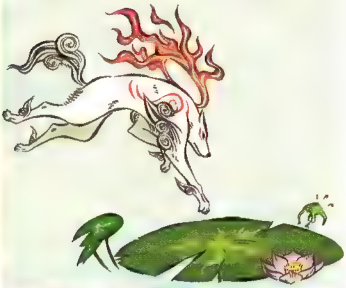
Wild at Art

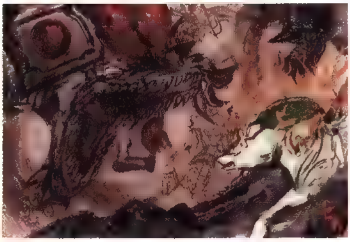
Capcom's phenomenal adventure game Okami is sinking its jaws into Wii. Get a taste of what awaits you with a look at the game's majestic artwork and an inside interview with the developers.

BY CHRIS HOFFMAN

Rarely has there been an adventure game that seems as perfectly suited to Wii as Okami does. In addition to all the trappings you'd expect from a top-notch epic adventure—a vast world in peril, a great story, loads of weapons, an upgradable move set, numerous side quests, tricky puzzles, mini-games, wicked-cool boss battles Okami innovates with Celestial Brush techniques, in which you draw symbols to fight enemies, affect the environment, and more. When the Clover Studio-developed game hit the PlayStation 2 in 2006 gamers were blown away, but many thought it would work even better with the Wii remote—and Capcom apparently agreed; the Wii version of the game is scheduled to arrive this spring. Aside from its deep Zelda-like gameplay and unique canine protagonist (*okami* is Japanese for *wolf*), Okami wowed gamers with its basis in traditional Japanese folklore and its breathtaking watercolor/woodblock aesthetic; the game looks like nothing else on the market. We'll bring you more Okami coverage in subsequent issues, but you can prepare for the journey by admiring the gorgeous artwork on the following pages, getting up to speed on the major characters, and going behind the scenes with the developers at Ready at Dawn for the latest information on what to expect from the Wii version of Okami.

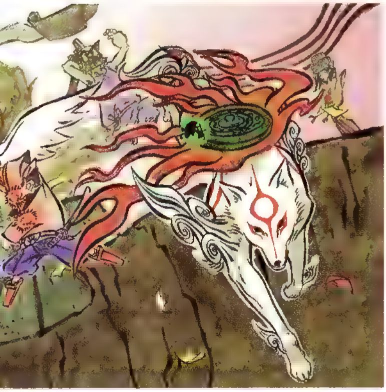


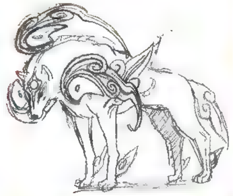


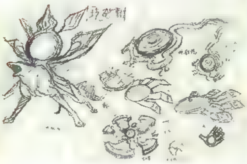


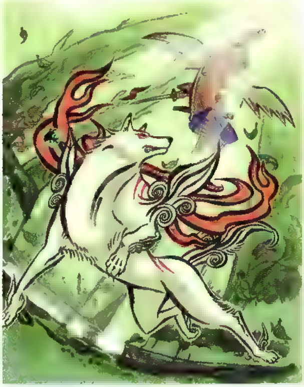
Amaterasu

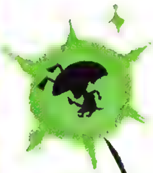
Taking the form of a white wolf, Amaterasu is the earthly incarnation of a powerful sun god. According to legend, Amaterasu and a brave warrior named Nagi teamed up one century prior to the events of Okami, at which time they defeated a horrible beast named Orochi. Although Amaterasu's physical form was destroyed in the battle, the god has returned (albeit not at full strength) now that Orochi's threat looms once again. Amaterasu can wield many types of weapons (called Divine Instruments), including glaives, rosaries, and shieldlike reflectors, and can harness the power of the Celestial Brush. As Amaterasu masters new brush techniques, the deity learns to bring foliage back to life, move and control water, slice through enemies, and create bombs out of thin air, among other skills.





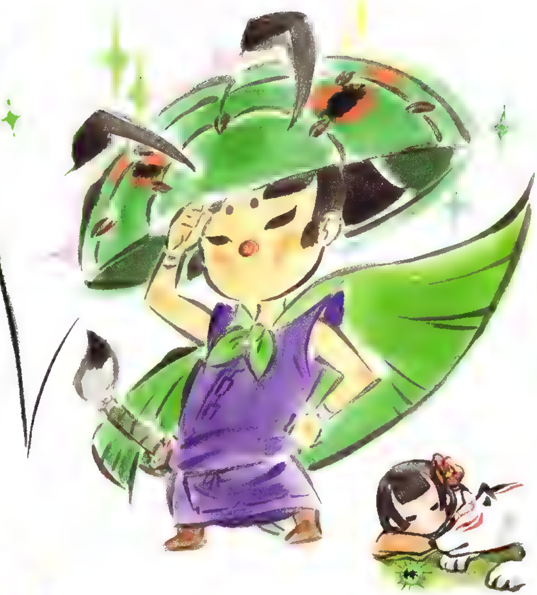


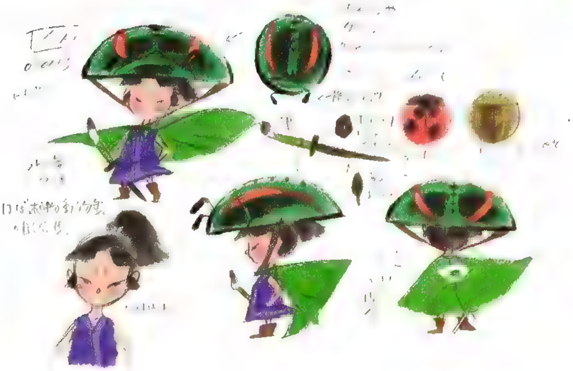


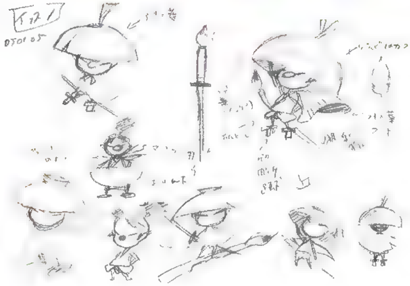


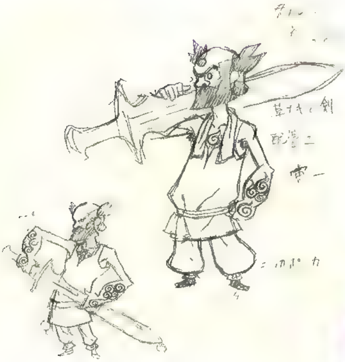
Issun

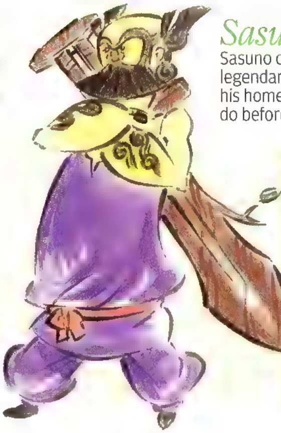
Flippant and lascivious, the tiny Issun becomes Amaterasu's traveling companion early in the game. Issun possesses extraordinary calligraphy skills (which he'll brag about to anybody he meets) but he hopes to become even better by stealing—er, learning—Amaterasu's Celestial Brush techniques during their journey. Issun is disrespectful toward others—he frequently refers to Amaterasu as "furball"—but he hates being on the receiving end of such comments, especially when people mistake him for a bug.





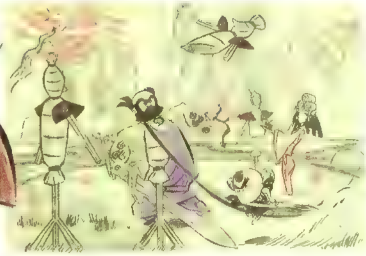


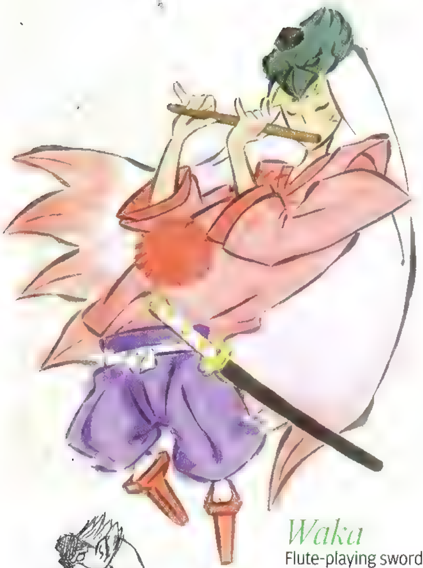


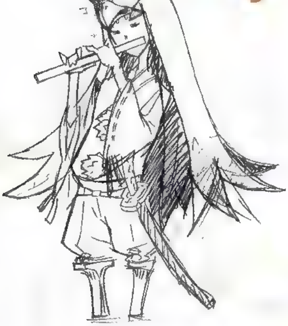


Sasuno

Sasuno claims he's a great warrior descended from the legendary Nagi, but he spends most of his time napping in his hometown of Kamiki Village. Sasuno has a lot of work to do before his actions live up to his boasts.

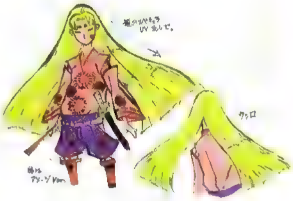


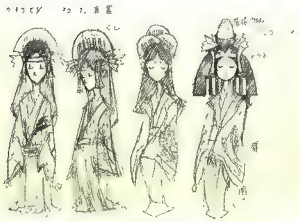


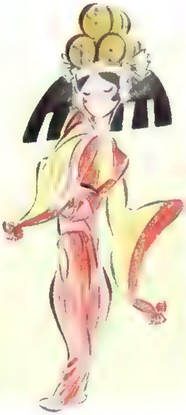


Waka

Flute-playing swordsman Waka appears periodically throughout Amaterasu's journey to challenge the god and drop cryptic clues. Is he a friend or foe? Waka's motivations are a mystery, and only time will tell whose side he's truly on.







Kushi

Sweet and innocent Kushi runs a bar in Kamiki Village. Her sake (rice wine) recipe is the stuff of legends; she's preparing a special batch to celebrate the 100-year anniversary of Orochi's defeat. Kushi is also the target of would-be hero Sasuno's affections.

A NEW DAWN FOR OKAMI

Founded by former members of acclaimed development studios Naughty Dog and Blizzard, Ready at Dawn has plenty of experience bringing hit series to new hardware—they also created Daxter and God of War: Chains of Olympus for PSP. Now the team is hard at work adapting Okami's adventure and artistry for Wii, retaining everything that players loved about the PS2 game while adding Wii-specific controls (and possibly more) to Clover Studio's masterpiece. Ready at Dawn president and cofounder Didier Malenfant shares his insight on bringing the renowned game to a new system and a new audience.

NINTENDO POWER: How does it feel to be giving such a critically acclaimed game a second chance at success?

DIDIER MALENFANT: First and foremost it's a huge honor to be asked to take over the work of a studio like Clover. In its short existence they quickly became one of the most respected game developers in the world. It's humbling to us that Capcom waited so long to find someone to tackle this project and picked us based on our own reputation in the industry. Secondly, it's an incredible amount of pressure. We seem to always tackle projects with a huge fan base and every time we get fan mail begging us not to screw it up. So far, so good, and I am sure Okami fans will be pleased this time around as well.

What was your experience like with the original game before you became involved with the Wii version?

Capcom first showed Okami during the same E3 we showed Daxter. Back then [Okami] was already the game we were the most impressed with by far. When it finally came out, it quickly became the game of the year for a lot us here. So I guess you could say we're all huge fans of the original. A lot of us here have finished the entire game and thoroughly enjoyed it.

What attracted Ready at Dawn to the project?

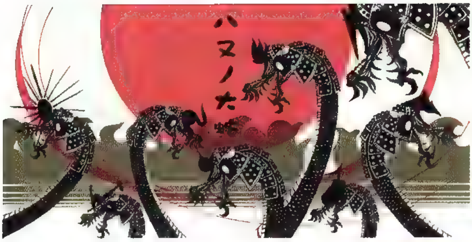
Like any projects we've worked on it's because we're huge fans of the game ourselves. We believe the only way to do a decent job on a game is to want to play that game yourself when it's finished. Okami is definitely one of those games. We're lucky to be in a position right now where we can pretty much work on whatever we want, so we pick only the projects that we're truly passionate about. It really shows in the results.

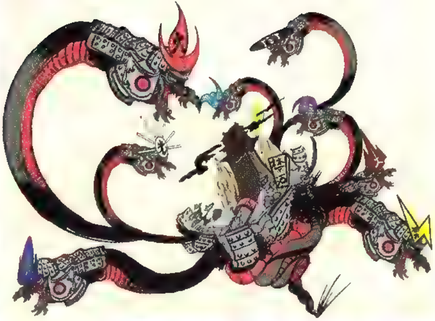
What can you tell us about the Wii controls?

Of course the obvious one is controlling the Celestial Brush. We don't want to give too much away at this point, but let's say that attacks and dodges in the game are something that we're looking into pretty seriously. It's all about what feels great and natural. Okami deserves too much respect to put anything in there as a gimmick.

How will fishing work?

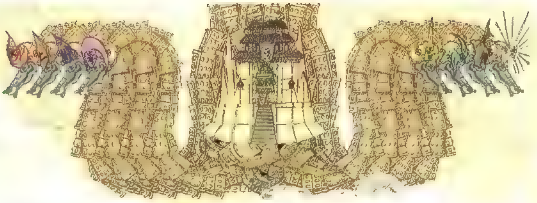
Very good question! Interestingly enough that is also something we're looking into using the Wii remote for. Again, anywhere it actually makes sense and enhances the experience we will be making the most of the unique controls provided by the Wii remote.

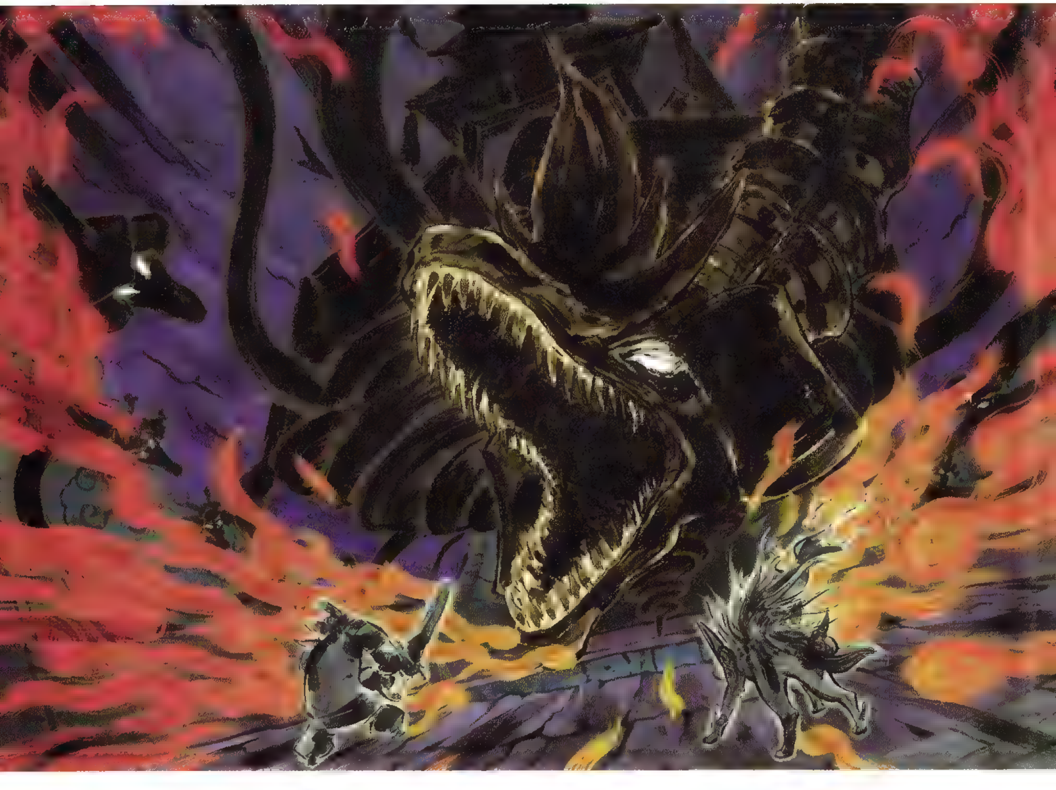




Orochi

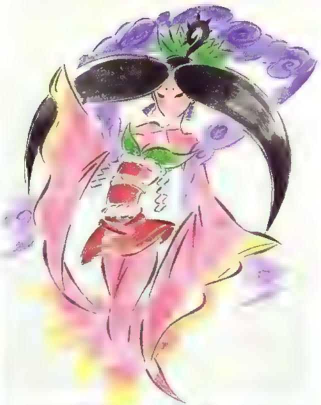
With eight heads each possessing a different form of attack, the mighty beast Orochi is a fearsome foe indeed. Orochi wreaked havoc on Kamiki Village until he was sealed away 100 years ago by Amaterasu and the swordsman Nagi. But now the seal is broken and Orochi has returned, spreading darkness and fear throughout the land.

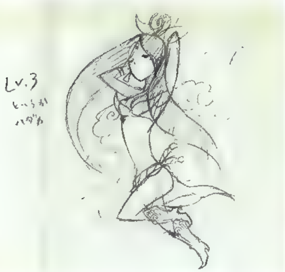


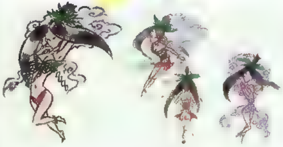


Sakuya

The wood sprite Sakuya inhabits a sacred tree in Kamiki Village, using her power to protect the town's inhabitants from evil. When Orochi begins to stir, Sakuya uses all her power to restore Amaterasu's physical form.

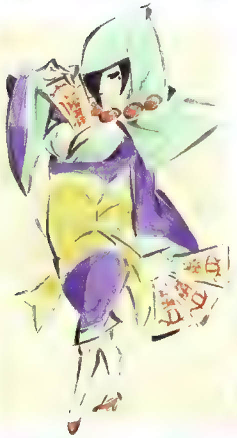


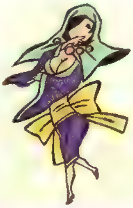


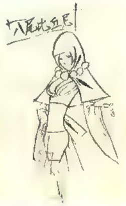


Rao

Partway through your long journey, you'll encounter the priestess Rao in the massive Sei-an City. Rao provides Amaterasu and Issun with plenty of advice, and at one point she even becomes Amaterasu's passenger (which provides you with extra power). For some reason, Issun is smitten with Rao.







大神
大神絵草子
Official Complete Works
CAPCOM

PRETTY AS A PICTURE BOOK

The beautiful images featured in this article are only a fraction of the amazing art that was created for Okami. If you like what you see here, you're in luck—an Okami art book called *Okami: Official Complete Works* is scheduled for February release in North America. Published by UDON Entertainment, the 288-page book will carry a suggested price of $39.99.

We've heard that Okami won't have any new content over the PS2 version. Is that still the case? What about progressive scan and widescreen support?

We haven't completely ruled anything out at this point, but there's a few reasons for us trying to be conservative at this point. First, it's already a 40- to 60-hour game and we want a game that the majority of people will get to enjoy, and finish. Secondly, games of this caliber have a fine balance of features and gameplay elements that makes them fun. We have to be careful before deciding to mess with that, especially since we're not the original designers of the game. Having said that, things like progressive scan and widescreen are on top of our list in terms of what we'd like to add to the Wii version.

What have been the biggest challenges of porting Okami to Wii?

Initially it was getting familiar with the code and the assets for the game. It's always very weird to dive into other people's creations, as they tend to do things in a different way than you would. In the end, the biggest challenge was converting all the game's models and textures. There are a lot of them and some require special attention to make sure they convert accurately from one platform to the other. It was the most time-consuming part by far because of the very specific art style in the game. We had to be careful so that it was preserved as we converted and repaired some of the assets.

What was it like re-creating the painterly visuals with the Wii hardware?

People often don't realize that, unlike a lot of games that try to shy away from a realistic look, Okami actually uses no rendering trick in the engine. Everything is done in the models and the textures. It's an amazing thing to look at when you have access to the source files. We've had quite a few of our artists just stare at these in awe of what the people at Clover were able to do without using any specific engine tricks.

Has the absence of the original dev team posed any particular problems for you?

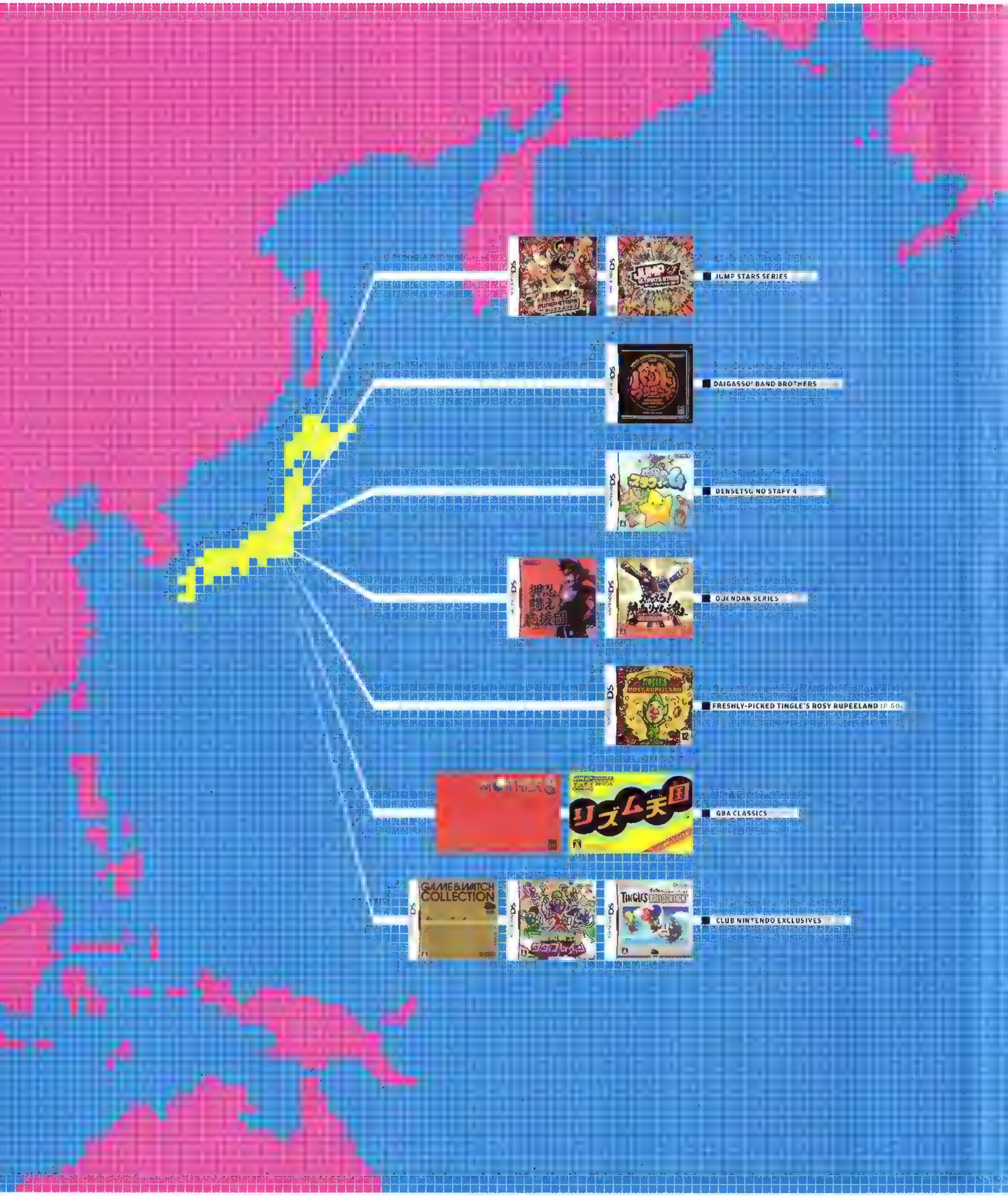
Of course, we would have loved to have them around to ask tons of questions regarding the game and why some things were done the way they were. But that wasn't an option, so in the end we probably took more time initially to get everything up and running than we would have with Clover's help. In the end, the goal is to make sure this game lives up to the standards they have set.

The PS2 version had plentiful bonus content. Will all that be included in the Wii version?

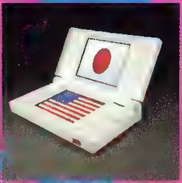
We want new fans of the game to experience everything that the PS2 version offered. Similarly, we wouldn't want original fans of the game to feel like anything was left out, so the goal is definitely to bring it all across.

What do you have to say to Wii owners who have yet to experience Okami?

They're in for an incredible treat. Okami is one of the most beautiful games I've ever had the chance to play. It has incredible depth, a wonderful story, and will finally get to be played the way it was meant to be, using the Wii controls to their full extents. Let's put it this way: even people who have played and completed the original game can't wait to play it again and will probably be the first ones in line to buy it, so that's really saying something.


JUMP STARS SERIES
DAIGASSO! BAND BROTHERS
DENSETSU NO STAFY 4
OUENDAN SERIES
FRESHLY-PICKED TINGLE'S ROSY RUPEELAND (P. 60)
GBA CLASSICS
CLUB NINTENDO EXCLUSIVES

Lost in Translation



12 JAPAN-ONLY DS GAMES THAT EVERY TRUE NINTENDO FAN SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

Here at Nintendo Power, we see games from all over the world. And just as there are hundreds of games each year that are only sold in North America, there are also plenty that are only available overseas. Many of these won't be missed, but occasionally a foreign title comes along that we fall in love with, that we feel many of you would really enjoy, too. There are lots of reasons why these gems haven't shipped here, but mainly it's the difference in cultural taste or the difficulty in licensing the games for sale outside of their home territory.

The list of fantastic Japan-only DS titles has grown so long that we can't sit idly by any longer! Even if you can't buy these amazing games at your local shop, we're making sure that you at least know they exist. If we're lucky, some of our picks might still make it over to our side of the globe one day. Until then, you'll have the following pages to help keep the dream alive.

BY CHRIS SLATE

[illegible]

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK MADEO

1-2

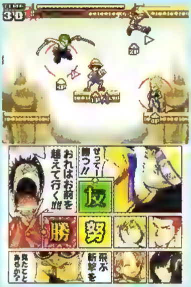
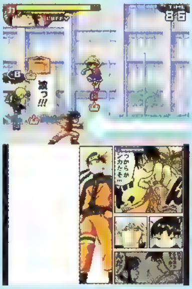
Jump Stars Series

Jump Super Stars (1)
PUBLISHED BY
NINTENDO
DEVELOPED BY
GANBARION
RELEASED
AUGUST 2005

Jump Ultimate Stars (2)
PUBLISHED BY
NINTENDO
DEVELOPED BY
GANBARION
RELEASED
NOVEMBER 2006

It sounds like wishful thinking: a four-player DS fighting game that plays like Super Smash Bros. and stars characters from Naruto, Bleach, Dragon Ball Z, and dozens of other top manga and anime. But Jump Super Stars is definitely real, and it's even spawned a sequel with online play via Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection—and both games were published by none other than Nintendo!

All of the characters in the game come from stories that have been published in *Weekly Shonen Jump*, Japan's best-selling manga anthology. In addition to the playable characters, there are numerous "help" characters that will come to your aid by using special attacks, by boosting your stats, or by recharging your health. You activate them by touching koma—comic-book panels straight out of *Weekly Shonen Jump*—that are arranged on the bottom screen. Similar to a card-battle game, you strategically pick a combination of koma and arrange them in your deck before a match. They come in different shapes and sizes, so fitting them together on the screen is like putting together a puzzle.

The game's main mode is navigated via an overworld map, similar to the ones used in games like Super Mario World on the SNES. Each level has numerous objectives to clear, from simply defeating all enemies to breaking every wall in less than two minutes to winning the fight with a full Special gauge, and many more. The varied challenges—and unlockable characters and levels—keep the action fresh through the entire game.

While we can't say for sure why the Jump games haven't been released in North America (after all, many of these characters are superpopular here), it's a good bet that there's just too much licensing red tape since every character is owned by a different creator. These games are really good, though, so we won't give up all hope just yet. You just can't beat having Naruto, Luffy, Ichigo, Goku, Kenshin and more mix it up in four-player fantasy battles. For anime and manga fans, these two games are a dream come true.

3

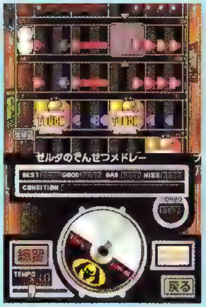
Daigasso! Band Brothers

Daigasso! Band Brothers
PUBLISHED BY
NINTENDO
DEVELOPED BY
NINTENDO
RELEASED
DECEMBER 2004

Daigasso! ("Grand Ensemble!") Band Brothers was a DS launch title in Japan and was once planned to release here under the title Jam with the Band. It's very different from other music/rhythm games in that you don't just hit buttons in time with a pre-recorded song; your performance is actually incorporated into the piece as you play.

After choosing from a long list of songs in various categories (mostly Japanese pop tunes with a few classical tracks and video game medleys), you pick which of the song's eight instruments you'll play. You input notes with the Control Pad, buttons, and touch screen, following the onscreen commands. Players can even create an entirely original composition to transfer to a friend's DS. But the biggest draw of Band Brothers—and where it gets its name—is the fact that up to eight people can play music together via wireless connection, each using their own DS as a different instrument.

The game is a blast, but takes some practice as it can be more challenging than many other music games. If it were to release here it would need an almost entirely new song list, as most of its tracks are Japanese pop tunes now past their prime. The game's unique approach to the genre, however, would still be just as fresh today.



Nintendo
NINTENDO DS
伝説のスタフィー4

5
Nintendo
NINTENDO DS
押忍!闘え!応援団
NINTENDO DS
燃えろ!熱血リズム魂

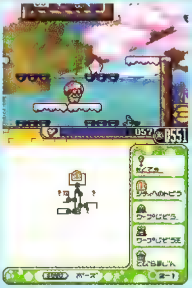
4 Densetsu no Stafy 4

[illegible]

99.99% of you have never heard of the developer TOSE, and that's just how the team there likes it. They primarily exist to support other studios from behind the scenes, and their work often goes uncredited. You would definitely know them by their games, however, as TOSE has created or contributed to many major titles, such as Dragon Quest Monsters: Joker, the Game Boy Color version of Metal Gear Solid, and Nintendo's own Super Princess Peach. Densetsu no Stafy ("Legendary Stafy") is the rare series that the developer takes full credit for, and it is their original creation.

The franchise got its start on Game Boy Advance, and the fourth title is the first to appear on DS. Stafy, the main character, fell from his home in the clouds into the sea, and everyone there assumed he was a starfish. He runs, jumps, and swims through mazelike levels that incorporate platform-hopping and a lot of underwater movement. Similar to Mario in Galaxy, Stafy spins to knock out feisty fish and crabby crustaceans, and he can gain other abilities, such as floating and wall-jumping. Stafy 4 also features the cute little guy's sister, Stapy, as a second playable character, and enhances the 2-D gameplay with polygonal 3-D backgrounds.

Comparable in quality to the pretty-good Super Princess Peach, the Stafy games are by no means on the same level as a New Super Mario Bros. Still, this is a solid, fun series that has built a decent following in Japan. Its Kirby-cute graphics and platform-hopping style are a perfect fit for Nintendo fans, so hopefully we'll see Stafy swim over to our side of the ocean someday.



5-6 Ouendan Series

[illegible]

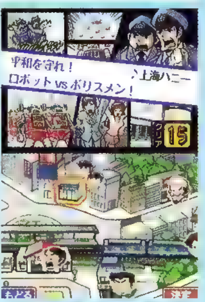
RELEASED
MAY 2007

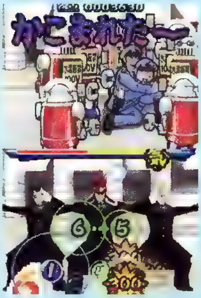
Most players who try Elite Beat Agents become instant fans of the music/rhythm game's catchy tunes, over-the-top story scenes, and addictive touch-screen gameplay. If you're among the EBA faithful, you'll be thrilled to know that the game is based on a series in Japan that includes two totally different games with all-new songs and stories: Osu! Tatakae! Ouendan ("Hey! Fight! Cheer Squad"), and Moero! Nekketsu Rhythm Damashii Osu! Tatakae! Ouendan 2 ("Hot-Blooded Rhythm Spirit: Hey! Fight! Cheer Squad 2").

For the most part, the Ouendan games play exactly like EBA—you tap onscreen icons to the beat of the music to make a three-man squad cheer for down-on-their-luck characters in a story that plays out on the top screen. But in Ouendan, the Elite Beat Agents are replaced by the type of Japanese cheer squad that leads rallies at the country's sporting events.

The scenarios that play out during each level are hilarious, and use a cool visual style that's a mixture of still images and simple animation. As in EBA, the games always end with our heroes saving the world with a positive spirit and infectious beats. The songs are all Japanese pop hits, some of which we recognized as tracks that were used as theme songs in anime like Fullmetal Alchemist.

Both Ouendan titles along with Elite Beat Agents—will go down in DS history as some of the system's best games. Due to the inherent cultural references we don't expect to ever see the Ouendan games released here, but our fingers are crossed for a sequel to EBA.





Freshly Picked
TINGLE'S
ROSY RUPEELAND
NINTENDO DS
12+

7 Freshly-Picked Tingle's Rosy Rupeeland

Freshly-Picked Tingle's Rosy Rupeeland

PUBLISHED BY
NINTENDO

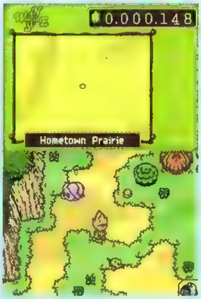
DEVELOPED BY
VANPOOL

RELEASED
[illegible]
2006 [illegible]
[illegible]
2007 (UK)

Love him or hate him, there's no denying that Tingle has firmly wedged himself into Nintendo gaming. The eccentric, middle-aged, fairy wannabe has appeared in some form in every Zelda game since N64's Majora's Mask seven years ago, but he's never taken a starring role in a major adventure—or has he? The oddly titled Freshly-Picked Tingle's Rosy Rupeeland released in Japan two years ago, and—breaking our Japan-only theme—also shipped in the UK and features a full English translation. Why, then, hasn't Tingle's greatest claim to fame been made available stateside? Nintendo once hosted an online poll to gauge US players' potential interest in the title—and we here at Nintendo Power tested the waters ourselves with a previous article on the game—and apparently the reaction from the masses wasn't strong enough to demand a release. That's too bad, because the game is one of the most unique adventures that we've seen in a long time.

Tingle's world revolves around Rupees, the currency made famous by the Legend of Zelda series. So in the game, you lose Rupees instead of health, and your goals involve finding ways to attain certain amounts of cash. Tingle's dedication to squeezing every last Rupee out of his adventure almost makes Wario look charitable. In more typical adventure-game fashion, Tingle's quest takes him through various dangerous locations and towns, and introduces him to many different characters. All the while he's bartering, shopping, and updating a more primitive version of the map from Phantom Hourglass.

Rosy Rupeeland isn't a triple-A title, but it's a worthy adventure with innovative gameplay, and stars an established character from one of Nintendo's top two franchises. For those reasons, we're still rooting for the weird little guy to one day get his shot in North America.



MOTHER 3
GAME BOY ADVANCE
ゲームボーイアドバンス
Nintendo
リズム天国

8-9 GBA Classics

Rhythm Tengoku (8)

PUBLISHED BY
NINTENDO

DEVELOPED BY
NINTENDO

RELEASED
AUGUST 2006

Mother 3 (9)

PUBLISHED BY
NINTENDO

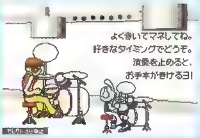
DEVELOPED BY
HAL & BROWNIE BROWN

RELEASED
APRIL 2006

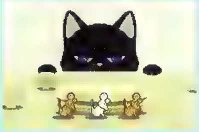
We can't wrap up our discussion of never-made-it-here games without mentioning two awesome GBA titles. Both are from Nintendo and offer some of the very best experiences we've ever had on our DS, even if they aren't DS games.

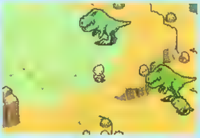
Rhythm Tengoku ("Rhythm Heaven") is an amazing WarioWare-style music game from the same folks that brought us that series. It consists of 25 minigames plus variations of each. The games last much longer than the few seconds that games get in the fast-paced WarioWare titles, but they're still short enough for quick pick-up-and-play sessions. Whether you're hitting baseballs into outer space, playing the drums with an alien, or keeping mice hidden from a cat, the controls are generally the same: simply tap the A button to the correct beat. You'd think that the minigames would have trouble holding your interest with such basic gameplay, but this is one of the most addictive titles we've ever seen.

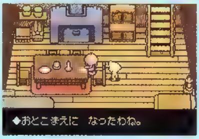
Mother 3 is the dialogue-heavy, long-awaited sequel to the SNES RPG EarthBound that earned a dedicated following when it released here in 1995. Unfortunately, the dialogue would take ages to translate into English, making the game's chances of one day releasing here even more slim. Nonetheless, we had to include Mother 3 because the series is just so good. It's classic old-school RPG goodness mixed with some of the funniest, wittiest writing gaming has ever seen. At least Lucas, the game's main character, is playable in Super Smash Bros. Brawl.



よくきいてマネしてね。
好きなタイミングでどうぞ。
演奏を止めると、
お手本が聞けるヨ!







◆おとこまえに　なったわね。

10
GAME & WATCH COLLECTION
NINTENDO DS
11
NINTENDO DS
12
NINTENDO DS
チンクルのバルーンファイトDS
Nintendo

10-12 Club Nintendo Exclusives

Game & Watch Collection (10)
PUBLISHED BY NINTENDO
DEVELOPED BY NINTENDO
RELEASED JULY 2006

[illegible] Sakeburein (11)
PUBLISHED BY NINTENDO
DEVELOPED BY NINTENDO
RELEASED SEPTEMBER 2007

Tingle's Balloon Fight (12)
PUBLISHED BY NINTENDO
DEVELOPED BY NINTENDO
RELEASED APRIL 2007

In Japan, purchasing Nintendo games earns the buyer points that can be redeemed for prizes as a part of a program called Club Nintendo. Some of the cooler rewards have been exclusive game soundtracks, a TV remote that looks just like a Wii remote, and—best of all—original Nintendo games that can't be bought in any store. To date, there have been three Club Nintendo titles, all for DS: Game & Watch Collection, Tingle's Balloon Fight, and Zekkyo Senshi Sakeburein ("Exclamation Warriors Sakeburein").

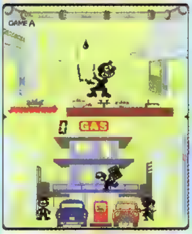
Game & Watch Collection includes three games—Oil Panic, Donkey Kong, and Green House—from Nintendo's classic line of pre-Game Boy handhelds. Each is very simple but offers bite-sized bits of fun that are still, all these years later, surprisingly addictive.

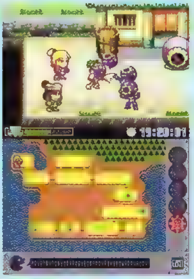
Tingle's Balloon Fight is a remix of Nintendo's classic arcade and NES title, which was simply titled Balloon Fight. Tingle's been added as a laugh, but the gameplay remains the same: tap the buttons to float through the air and pop your enemies' balloons before they pop yours. This is a nice title to pull out when you've got only a short time to play.

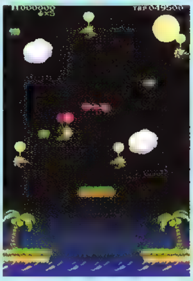
Zekkyo Senshi Sakeburein is the oddest of the bunch. The game, which allows three players via download play, is a throwback to the classic Japanese Power Ranger-type heroes that sport brightly colored spandex, strike action poses, and yell out the names of their martial arts moves. Yelling, in fact, is what this game is all about, as the DS microphone is used extensively to perform attacks and other actions. Unfortunately the game only recognizes Japanese commands and would require a total overhaul to work with English, so it seems highly unlikely that we'll ever see it release here.

These extremely rare games are the ultimate collectibles for Japanese DS owners, but they're not the only lucky ones. Nintendo of America has also given out bonus gifts for registering games and taking part in surveys at Nintendo.com. Past freebies have included an exclusive GameCube collection of classic Zelda games and various collectible stylus designs. Don't miss out!

OIL PANIC







HISTORY'S HIDDEN HARDWARE

[illegible]

[illegible] / 1986

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

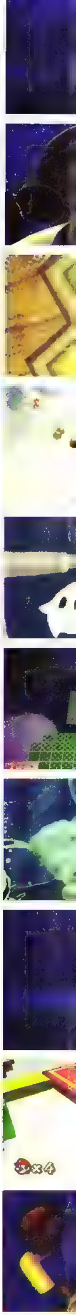
[illegible]

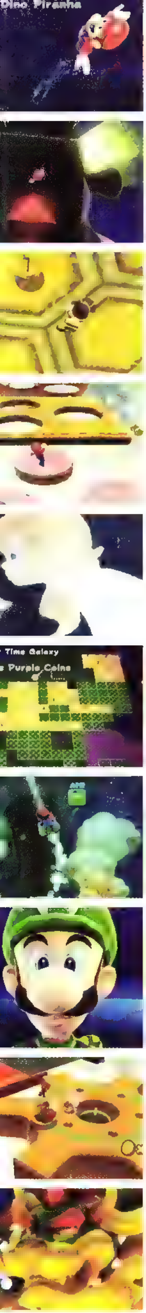
GAME BOY LIGHT
ゲームボーイライト

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] planned for a US [illegible] was soon cancelled. The N64DD [illegible]


x4



WARNING: Spoilers Inside!

Magic Moments

Game director Yoshiaki Koizumi shares the stories...

...behind our favorite parts of Super Mario Galaxy.

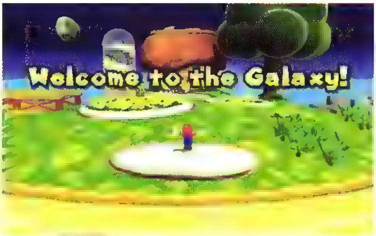
Even after collecting 120 stars, we just can't stop thinking about the amazing Super Mario Galaxy. It's packed with some of the best levels and challenges in the entire Mario series, and has a seemingly endless number of memorable moments. As impossible as it is to trim down the list of our favorite scenes to just 10, we've given it our best shot, and Yoshiaki Koizumi—the game's director—was kind enough to give us his commentary on each one.

While most Nintendo fans have heard of legendary game designer (and Mario creator) Shigeru Miyamoto, you might not have heard of Koizumi. But you definitely know the games that he's worked on, which include every major Mario and Zelda title starting with The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past for SNES. His first shot at directing came with Super Mario Sunshine, which he followed up with the criminally overlooked Donkey Kong: Jungle Beat (the GameCube title is still available in some stores and will play on your Wii—get it if you can!).

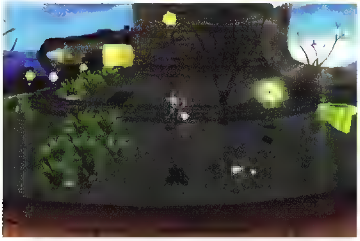
Koizumi's comments cover the entirety of Super Mario Galaxy, so if you haven't experienced the full game and don't want anything to be spoiled, don't read any further! File this article away and come back for it later—it'll still be here. For the rest of you Mario experts (and spoiler-loving Galaxy newbies), here-a we go!

The Adventure Begins!

After a quick tutorial on controls while chasing rabbits, Mario begins his first real stage in glorious fashion. He soars through the stars and lands with a flourish on the first planet in the Good Egg Galaxy in an awe-inspiring start to the grand adventure. The first area—with its sunlit grassy fields and shadowed upside-down tower—is a memorable introduction to the game's core features.



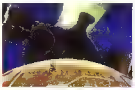
Good Egg Galaxy

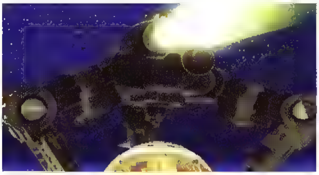


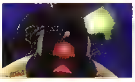
"The most important thing to get across to the player in that moment was that what had always been taboo in older Mario games—walking over the edge of a platform—was something that was going to be completely broken in this game. We were going to get away from that rule entirely and expand on the possibilities from there.

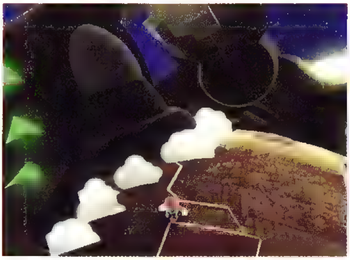
Before the Good Egg Galaxy, on the very first planet—the totally round one where you chase the rabbits—we get across the idea that there is gravity. But the moment becomes a little more dramatic on that first planet of the Good Egg Galaxy because it's shaped more like a platform and actually has an edge. So again, here we had to remind players that, while gravity has always pointed down in previous games, that rule is broken completely in Super Mario Galaxy."

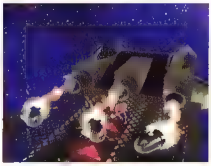
The Stage You Fight Against





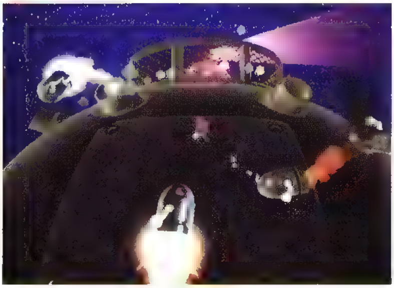




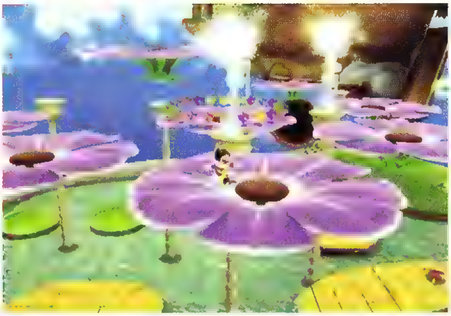


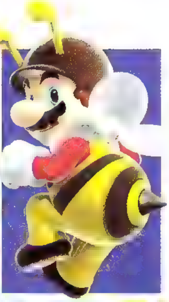
This is much more than any ordinary boss. Mario must climb up the mammoth Megaleg, jump over obstacles, and fight smaller enemies on its surface—it's like fighting a level that's come to life! The large scale and variety of challenges make this an unforgettable boss battle.

"We originally had this idea of climbing onto something really big and moving around on top of it for Link's final boss fight in Ocarina of Time, but we realized that it wouldn't work because you couldn't see Ganon if you were on top of him. So, we had to scrap the idea at that time, but we were really excited when the opportunity finally came around to reuse it in Galaxy. When we first started work on Galaxy we made a prototype version of the game with a very small team, sort of like a "proof of concept" for development, and Megaleg was actually the first boss that we designed for it. We had a very good feeling about it as soon as we got it into the game. It was the realization of an idea that I'd been wanting to work with for a long time: to climb over something big and finally destroy the core. And the whole way through you're able to use the differing effects of gravity to get there. I was very happy with how it came out."



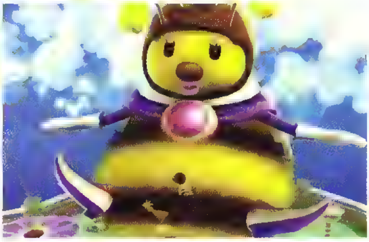
Buzzing Around

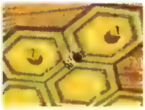




Just as the raccoon-like Tanooki Mario became synonymous with Super Mario Bros. 3, Bee Mario has stood out as Mario's most iconic new look in Galaxy. As fun and useful as it is silly, Mario's fuzzy new form shows up a lot more than his other suits, and Bee Mario's hover ability, though limited, can be a real lifesaver.

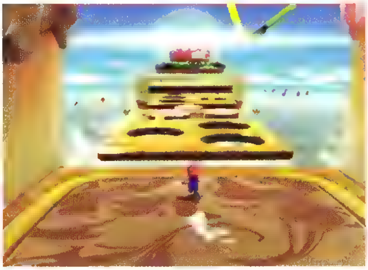
"One of the things that we were trying to accomplish with Bee Mario was to get away from the very masculine feel of the space theme, where we have suns, comets, spaceships, and large explosions. Some of that tends to get a little dark, but the Mario world is actually a very colorful one, so we wanted to bring that out more with the bee world. In a functional, mechanical sense, Bee Mario gives the player the ability to hover, which was also an ability in Super Mario Sunshine, that allows the player to overcome some of the problems of gauging depth and distance by delaying the time in which they must take action. So in many ways, Bee Mario and the whole idea of the huge queen bee and small talking bees was just a good fit for the Mario world."

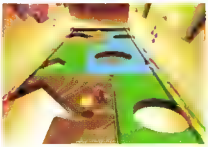




The Old-School Gauntlet

The Rocky Road in the Sweet Sweet Galaxy is the game's first daunting challenge, and an early reminder of the kind of gameplay that has made past Mario games so special. Its demanding platform-jumping and old-school Mario music make it an especially sweet treat for longtime series fans.



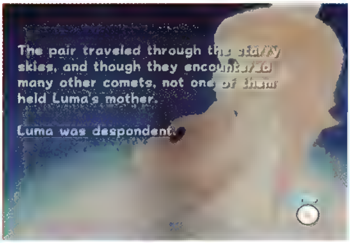


"If the game only consisted of planets that you couldn't fall off of, there would be no danger—no sense of real excitement, catastrophe, or consequence. So we wanted to put that sort of platform level in early on to remind people of the traditional Mario feeling that you get from trying to land on platforms.

To further recall the classic Mario feel, the composer—who did some work on Super Mario Bros. 3—decided on his own to use music that reminded people of that game on this level. I wasn't even aware that he'd done this until the music was already in the game."

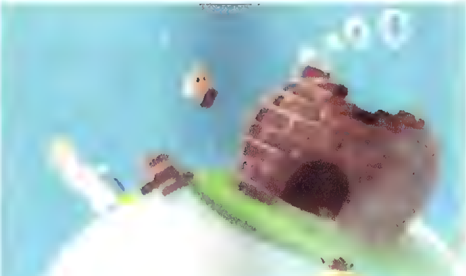
In addition to having the old hands that have been at Nintendo for a long time, we also bring in a lot of new blood. The funny thing is, the old employees always want to create something completely new and don't want to go back to anything they've done before, whereas new employees have really strong feelings of nostalgia that they hope to re-create in the projects they work on. For Galaxy, a composer that came from another company formed a really interesting collaboration with the musicians that had been here much longer to get a combination of something new and something nostalgic from previous Mario games. It's so ironic that you have to get new blood to turn the project toward a more nostalgic direction."

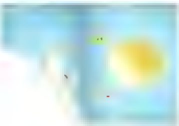
Rosalina's Storybook

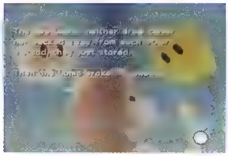


The pair traveled through the starry skies, and though they encountered many other comets, not one of them held Luma's mother.

Luma was despondent.







In an unexpected twist for a Mario game, players can experience a detailed backstory for the mysterious new character Rosalina via cutscenes that are unlocked as you play through the game. Mario adventures usually don't tell us more than "Bowser has kidnapped the princess," but here we're treated to a sweet tale that tugs at the heartstrings and helps define the unique mood and style of Galaxy.

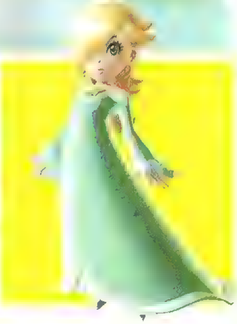
"I have a lot of responsibilities as a director, but writing scenarios is special to me because it's what I used to focus on exclusively.

The story of how I created Rosalina's tale is actually kind of interesting because I had to keep it a secret from Mr. Miyamoto, who didn't know that I was doing it. When I presented it to him, Mr. Miyamoto said, "Are you telling me that you worked on this late at night when no one was around so that they wouldn't find out about it?" And I said, "Yes, it was very important to me."

It's often thought that Mario games don't need stories; for Galaxy, all most people really need to know is why Mario is in space and why the player must collect stars. But for those that would like a deeper narrative experience, I wanted to create a backdrop of Rosalina and the Lumas; what their relationship is to each other, how they came to the point they are at when you meet them, and how Mario had connected with a much larger story.

Now, when writing a story for a Mario game, I wanted to make sure that I matched the patterns of the actual gameplay. In Mario games, there are constantly peaks and valleys of finding a challenge, not being able to get past it, and then getting better and eventually overcoming it. That was the cycle of events that happened in the storybook over and over again as Rosalina had many disappointments that she eventually overcame with the help of the Lumas. So, introducing a story like that—which sort of bolsters the player's feeling that there is hope, that it is possible to persevere—was a really good way to encapsulate all of this. And we put it off to the side, so that the story is there for people who want that greater experience, but it doesn't bother people who don't need it.

In all of the games that I've worked on, I've tried to show people what happens over the passage of time. Even though the goal is to clear the game, I want something to stay in the player's heart rather than have the experience disappear as soon as they finish. For example, at the very end of Link's Awakening, when you see the woman in the dream, it's not like you just finish the game and everything disappears, but rather you take with you an understanding in your heart of what she was feeling. Similarly, in Majora's Mask you have a game world that resets over a certain period of time, so it's a constant repetition of the same events. What allows you to reach the goal is the player's persistence of memory.

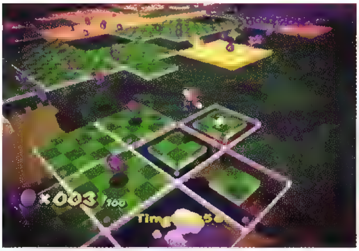


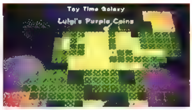
So with Rosalina's story in Galaxy, I wanted to get across the sense of repetition that comes with failure and success, failure and success, but ultimately being able to persevere and take something away with you.

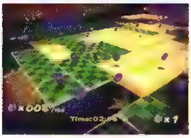
On a side note, there is someone at Nintendo who has taken Rosalina's story scenes and put them together as a picture book. He just made one copy for him, as a sort of souvenir of the experience, but when I looked at the book I had this really great feeling that I'd love for more people to have this. I would love to see it published as a children's book."

The Hardest Part of the Game

The Toy Time Galaxy's Purple Coin challenge is the game's ultimate test. It requires players to think fast and maneuver faster while collecting coins scattered across a free-floating, Luigi-shaped obstacle course made of flipping and disappearing platforms. And just when you grab that hundredth coin and the star appears, there's not enough solid ground left to get you to it!

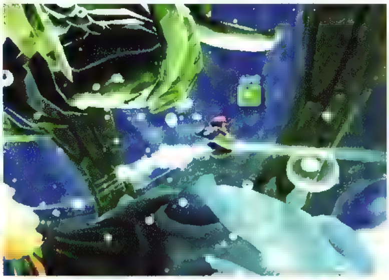






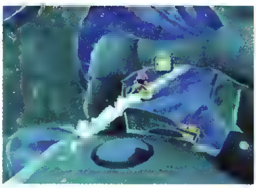
"Previous 3-D Mario games tended to appeal to a select group of players that feel comfortable navigating a three dimensional space, but I wanted to make a game where everyone can have fun. For advanced gamers who are very comfortable with 3-D platformers, we created the purple coin challenges, which were intended to be the most challenging levels. Also, once you finish the game with 120 stars and unlock Luigi, he makes the game even more challenging, because his jumps are a bit floatier and he doesn't have as much friction when he tries to stop. In the regular Mario playthrough, the levels become harder in the second half of the game, but the first half was designed so that a greater number of people could play through and feel like they had finished the game."

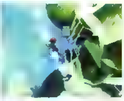
Exploring the Depths

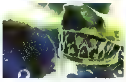


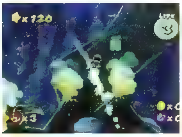
Water worlds are a staple of Mario games, but they've rarely been done as well as they are in Galaxy. Zipping around on the back of a turbo-charged turtle shell is a joy, and the game's gorgeous underwater locations provide some of the most breathtaking graphics we've seen on Wii to date. The battle with Bonefin, in a small water-filled galaxy built purely for the fight, is one of the game's real jaw-dropping moments.

"I've heard from many people who think the swimming stages are a bit too difficult. But looking back at other games that I've worked on—like the Zelda games and Jungle Beat—I tend to think that water levels are, in general, very difficult because there's a different sense of gravity and your movement is slowed. I think that there should be a challenge there; it's supposed to be a little bit harder to play. But the main point that I want to get across is that the experience in these areas is very different from the one you have while walking around. We're constantly balancing how easy we should make it—we don't want to challenge the player in a way that makes them frustrated, but rather give them something that they can, with practice, overcome. Coming up with the shell's use in water was a nice moment where we realized that using it would make swimming easier and more fun, and adding it made it possible for us to include deeper water areas to up the challenge."





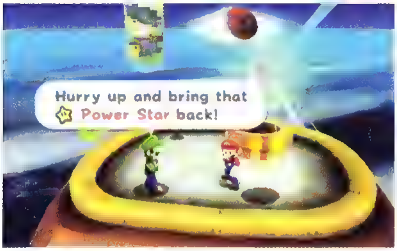




Family Photos

Luigi's appearance in the game introduces a brand-new kind of challenge for Mario: that of finding and rescuing his brother in various stages with the only clue to his whereabouts being a photo of a tiny part of the world Luigi is trapped in. Not only is it entertaining to discover the various situations that Luigi gets himself stuck in, but these challenges are unique in that they test the player's memory of different stages. If only there were more of these fresh, fantastic challenges.

You got a Star!

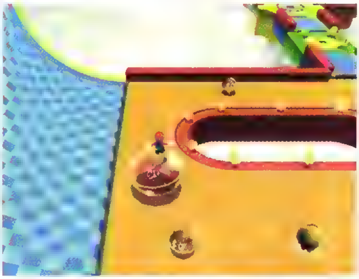

Hurry up and bring that Power Star back!

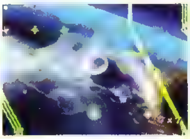
You came to save me again! I knew I could count on you, Bro!

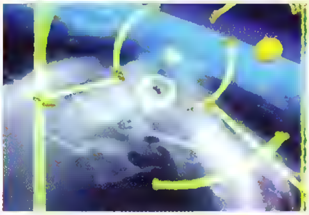
"We wanted to put in more of the "find Luigi" challenges, but with so much to do we simply ran out of time. Still, we really wanted to make these stand out, so we added the feature that Luigi would send mail to the player's Wii menu. There were other ideas as well, that due to time restraints, had to be saved for later."

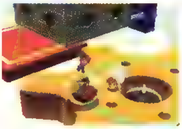
Surfing, Rolling, and Floating

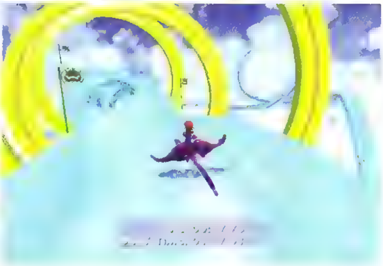
The special challenge levels stand out as vastly different Mario experiences with unique Wii controls. While surfing on a ray, rolling around on a giant ball, or floating around in a big bubble, the player gets a chance to take a break from the normal planet-hopping gameplay and experience something new and fun with the Wii remote.







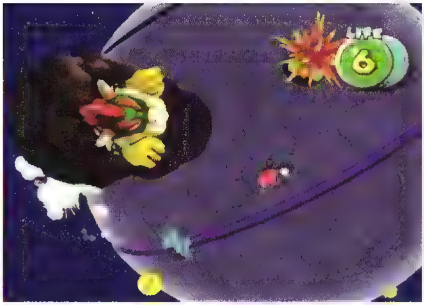




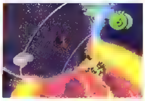
"When we first began to explore the Wii hardware, we spent a lot of time thinking about different control schemes. We tested lots of concepts, and the best of these ideas became the special challenges in Galaxy. They have a different feel to them and provide a nice mix to the regular action."

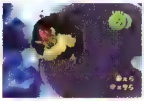
Bowser's Final Battle

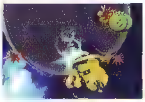
So, Mario, as you can see, I got big plans. And stomping you is at the top of my list!

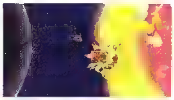


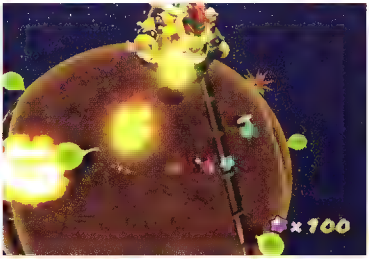
It's perhaps the most epic showdown that we've ever seen between Mario and his arch-nemesis, and it's certainly one of their longer and more challenging fights. With nothing less than the entire universe hanging in the balance, Mario takes on the cosmically charged Koopa King in a three-act battle featuring amazing visuals, varied gameplay, and blockbuster story scenes.

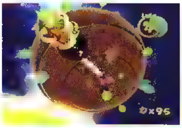




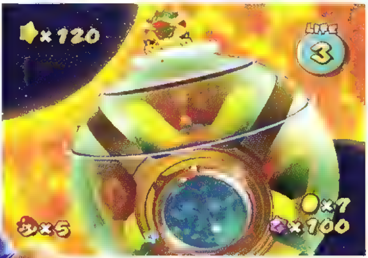


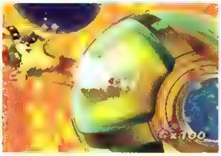






"We wanted to get away from a situation where Bowser just kidnaps Peach for seemingly no reason, so his plans are much more ambitious this time. In this game we took Bowser away from being cuddly and made him a more powerful, meaner threat. He really has a lot of power this time, and with that comes a greater capacity for evil."

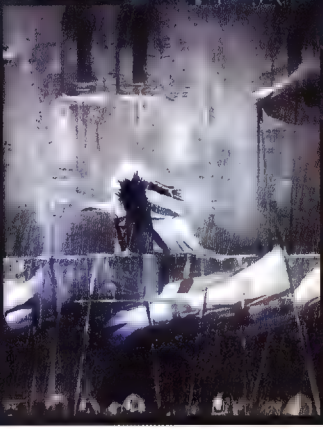


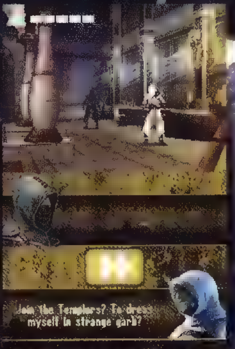


PATH OF THE ASSASSIN

Get a new take on Ubisoft's medieval hit man with Assassin's Creed on DS.

BY JUSTIN CHENG

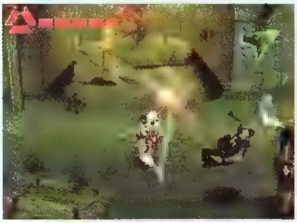


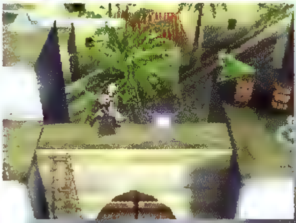


Join the Templars? To dress myself in strange garb?

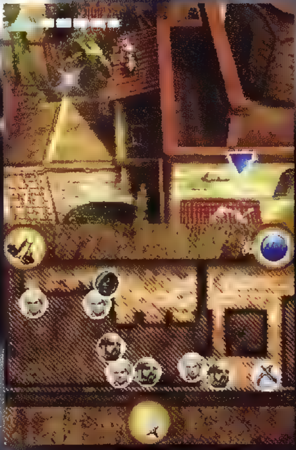
The Templars remain a thorn in Altair's side throughout both this game and the console version.

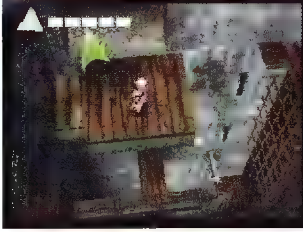
Bringing a console game to a handheld can be tricky—especially when we're talking about a vast, open-world game like Assassin's Creed. Developer Gameloft approached the problem in an intriguing way: instead of stripping the game down and cramming it on a DS card, they made an entirely new adventure that has the essence of the original yet fits perfectly on the handheld.





Assassin's Creed on DS is a much more linear experience than its console sibling, but it manages to replicate Altair's acrobatic free-running abilities rather well.



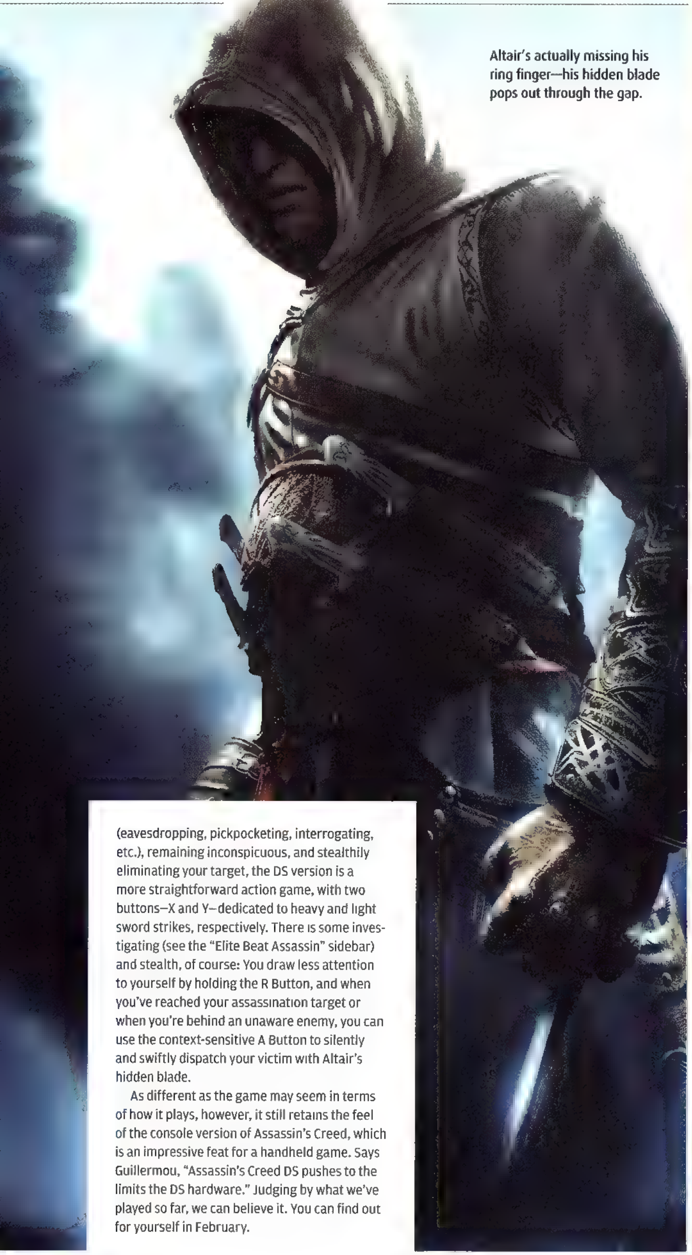


To make the game appeal to even those who have played the PS3 or Xbox 360 version, Gameloft made Assassin's Creed for DS a prequel. "The game will help players understand how Altair became what he is in the console game," explains Gameloft brand manager Marine Guillermou. "The Templars are holding an artifact [that has the power to] end the Crusades. They are waiting for one of the sides, the Crusaders or the Saracens, to offer the right price to obtain it. Altair is tasked with retrieving that particular item."

The item in question is referred to only as "the chalice," and Altair must run and jump and climb and fight his way through four cities to get it. Like in the console game, all the gameplay is in 3-D, but the cities themselves are smaller in scale and are decidedly more conducive to platforming, with numerous balance beams and deadly traps and seemingly bottomless gaps that sometimes require Altair's new grappling hook to cross. The cities are more linear, too, with collectible orbs (used to upgrade your health and weapons) and onscreen arrows to point you in the right direction.

Based on the levels we played, the gameplay is slightly reminiscent of the 2-D Prince of Persia games, only much less difficult and much better looking. There's a reason for the latter: "The team spent a lot of time making sure the way the main character, Altair, as well as his allies and enemies move onscreen, are up to the groundbreaking standards the Xbox 360 and PS3 versions set," says Guillermou. "Bringing a fluid and dynamic 3-D movement for a character on DS was not an easy task indeed. We had a top-notch animation team that really put their heart into capturing the grace and deadliness of a medieval assassin."

That deadliness comes across as more action-oriented this time around. Whereas the original game was focused on completing investigations



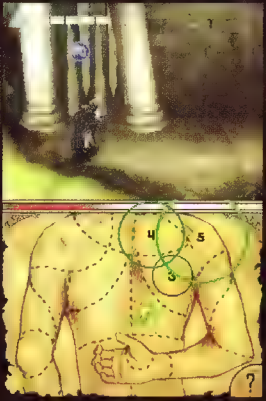
Altair's actually missing his ring finger—his hidden blade pops out through the gap.

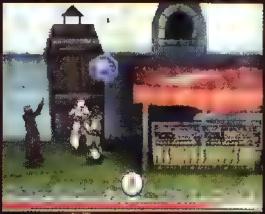
(eavesdropping, pickpocketing, interrogating, etc.), remaining inconspicuous, and stealthily eliminating your target, the DS version is a more straightforward action game, with two buttons—X and Y—dedicated to heavy and light sword strikes, respectively. There is some investigating (see the "Elite Beat Assassin" sidebar) and stealth, of course: You draw less attention to yourself by holding the R Button, and when you've reached your assassination target or when you're behind an unaware enemy, you can use the context-sensitive A Button to silently and swiftly dispatch your victim with Altair's hidden blade.

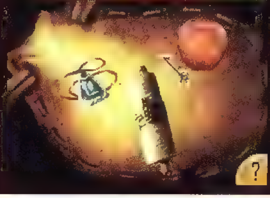
As different as the game may seem in terms of how it plays, however, it still retains the feel of the console version of Assassin's Creed, which is an impressive feat for a handheld game. Says Guillermou, "Assassin's Creed DS pushes to the limits the DS hardware." Judging by what we've played so far, we can believe it. You can find out for yourself in February.

Elite Beat Assassin

While the combat and platforming don't make use of the touch screen, the investigation minigames do. We played two of them: Pickpocketing and Pressure Points. Pickpocketing requires that you use the stylus to move a key to the exit, avoiding any other objects along the way. Pressure Points is an Elite Beat Agents-style game where you hit your victim's pressure points. "These minigames were designed to both fit into the story and the general Medieval Middle East atmosphere, while taking advantage of the DS features," Guillermou tells us. "The stylus is used in the Pressure Points minigame on a rhythm-based exercise, whereas the Pickpocketing minigame asks for concentration and precision. At some other moments in the game the player will need to use the microphone too, but we'll leave the details on that feature as a surprise for players."







MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

HELLO
my name is
Chris

This is **Chris**, hardcore gamer. He's been playing video games ever since he could grip a controller. When he was growing up, **his parents used the ESRB rating**

choose the games that were right for him. One day he'll use the ratings to **decide what games his kids play** – he just doesn't know it yet.

www.ESRB.org

20 YEARS

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1988:

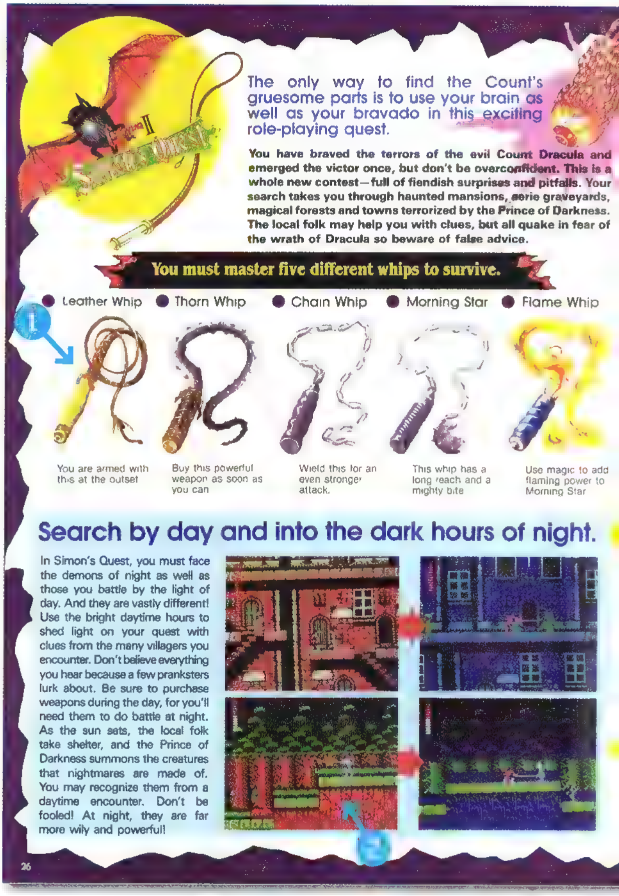
All Aboard

VOLUME 2 • SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1988 • PAGES 24-40

In many ways, NP's second volume, featuring Castlevania II: Simon's Quest on the cover, represents the true beginning of Nintendo's magazine publishing effort. One notable difference between the first two magazine issues was that Vol. 1 was a freebie received by a million lucky readers, but fans had to shell out money to receive the second issue. Here was the true test, and NP was equal to the challenge, attracting hundreds of thousands of subscribers on its way to becoming the best-selling youth magazine of the late '80s. Vol. 2 was also the debut issue for Nintendo's in-house editorial staff, including myself and contributing editor George Sinfield. The first issue was written by Lynn Griffes based on translated Japanese notes and help from game counselor J.C. Appel.

This month I'd like to take a peek behind the scenes and provide some insights into how those early issues were created. Looking back at it now, it's hard to believe some of the primitive methods we employed to bring you state-of-the-art video game coverage. Somehow, it all seemed to work. **BY SCOTT PELLAND**

Our most notorious image of all time graced (or disgraced) the September/October 1988 cover. Posed in a studio shoot overseen by designer [illegible] Bl[illegible] and snapped by photographer Darrell Peterson, was [illegible] more [illegible] Simon Belmont of Castlevania fame holding the severed head of Dracula. So that [illegible] no [illegible] about Drac's demise, we [illegible] heart in the background. [illegible] have felt [illegible] knowing [illegible] had taken his last sip of [illegible] parents wrote to [illegible] their [illegible] future covers displayed [illegible] heads [illegible] attached to shoulders.



The only way to find the Count's gruesome parts is to use your brain as well as your bravado in this exciting role-playing quest.

You have braved the terrors of the evil Count Dracula and emerged the victor once, but don't be overconfident. This is a whole new contest—full of fiendish surprises and pitfalls. Your search takes you through haunted mansions, eerie graveyards, magical forests and towns terrorized by the Prince of Darkness. The local folk may help you with clues, but all quake in fear of the wrath of Dracula so beware of false advice.

You must master five different whips to survive.

● Leather Whip	● Thorn Whip	● Chain Whip	● Morning Star	● Flame Whip
You are armed with this at the outset	Buy this powerful weapon as soon as you can	Wield this for an even stronger attack.	This whip has a long reach and a mighty bite	Use magic to add flaming power to Morning Star

Search by day and into the dark hours of night.

In Simon's Quest, you must face the demons of night as well as those you battle by the light of day. And they are vastly different! Use the bright daytime hours to shed light on your quest with clues from the many villagers you encounter. Don't believe everything you hear because a few pranksters lurk about. Be sure to purchase weapons during the day, for you'll need them to do battle at night. As the sun sets, the local folk take shelter, and the Prince of Darkness summons the creatures that nightmares are made of. You may recognize them from a daytime encounter. Don't be fooled! At night, they are far more wily and powerful!

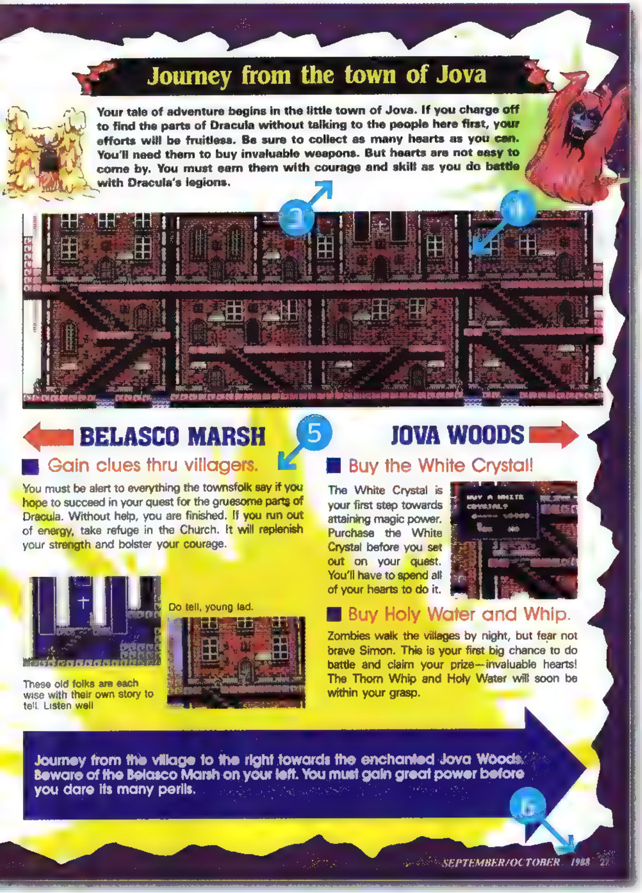
26

1 Illustrated art has always been an important element of NP's coverage. Back in the 8-bit era, in-game sprite images were usually too small and blocky to depict game elements recognizably. Fortunately, most publishers supplied copious amounts of cool art, such as all of Simon's whip upgrades. Thank you, Konami!

2 Capturing screenshots from video games today is often just a one- or two-mouse-click process, but that wasn't the case in 1988. Initially we had to take photographs of TV screens using huge paper cones to block excess light! When we published tips for taking NES Achievers high-score photos, we were writing from experience.

OF NINTENDO POWER

#2 IN OUR YEARLONG CELEBRATION OF NINTENDO POWER'S CLASSIC MOMENTS



Journey from the town of Jova

Your tale of adventure begins in the little town of Jova. If you charge off to find the parts of Dracula without talking to the people here first, your efforts will be fruitless. Be sure to collect as many hearts as you can. You'll need them to buy invaluable weapons. But hearts are not easy to come by. You must earn them with courage and skill as you do battle with Dracula's legions.

BELASCO MARSH

JOVA WOODS

Gain clues thru villagers.

You must be alert to everything the townsfolk say if you hope to succeed in your quest for the gruesome parts of Dracula. Without help, you are finished. If you run out of energy, take refuge in the Church. It will replenish your strength and bolster your courage.

These old folks are each wise with their own story to tell. Listen well

Do tell, young lad.

Buy the White Crystal!

The White Crystal is your first step towards attaining magic power. Purchase the White Crystal before you set out on your quest. You'll have to spend all of your hearts to do it.

Buy Holy Water and Whip.

Zombies walk the villages by night, but fear not brave Simon. This is your first big chance to do battle and claim your prize—invaluable hearts! The Thorn Whip and Holy Water will soon be within your grasp.

Journey from the village to the right towards the enchanted Jova Woods. Beware of the Belasco Marsh on your left. You must gain great power before you dare its many perils.

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1988 27

3 Sometimes we got a little carried away with dramatic presentations, and I'm not talking about page design. Check out this passage: "But hearts are not easy to come by. You must earn them with courage and skill as you do battle with Dracula's legions." They were heroic times.

4 Last month Chris noted NP's old-school 2-D maps. But how were these marvels created? With the advent of photo printers that could be plugged into the NES, we were able to take screenshots and print them on 4 x 6 sheets of paper. Then we pasted all the prints together on big boards to create maps like the one of Jova shown here. Believe it or not, some of those original photo maps were as big as a dining room table!

5 Red arrows. Blue boxes. Screenshots. Illustrations. Maps. Splashes of color. Copy. All these elements existed on separate pieces of paper, which were combined at Dai Nippon Printing Co. in Tokyo by a team of composition experts using knives, scissors, paste, and tape. It was like a kindergarten art project gone mad. (Fun historical fact: Cut and Paste functions in today's software are named after this old-style production.)

6 Today NP is produced digitally using software more powerful than anything we could have imagined in 1988. In those days, it took three months to go from concept to final product. Now it takes a bit less than a month to produce NP, and with just a fraction of the staff.

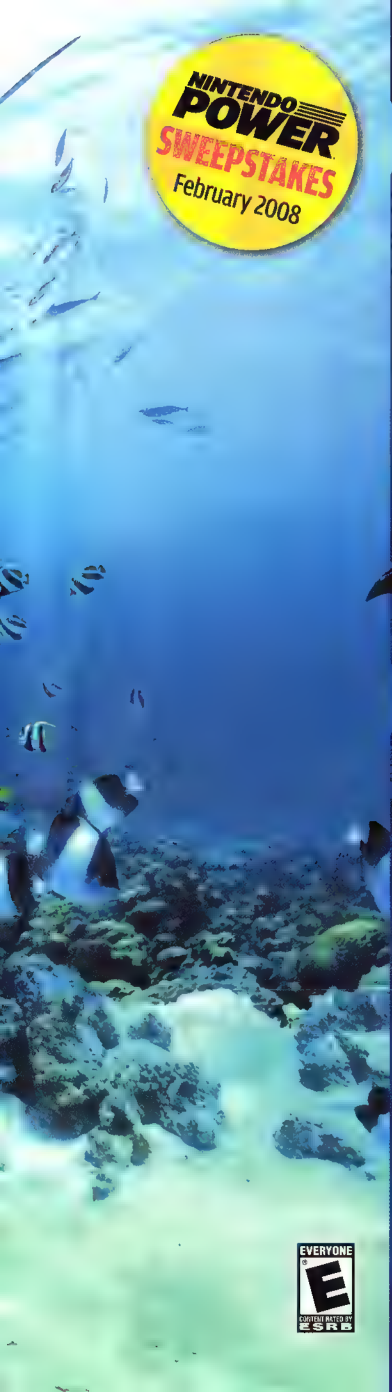
HOWARD'S END?

[illegible]

NINTENDO POWER
PLAYERS PO
JUST FILL OUT OUR PLAYER'S POLL AND YOU COULD WIN ONE OF THESE GREAT PRIZES
GRAND PRIZE 1
10 GAMES
PRO-AM
ONE OF 5
ONE OF 10
C
IF
WI

WIN A PIECE OF PARADISE!

Dive into a world of wonder and discovery with Nintendo's Endless Ocean for Wii.



NINTENDO POWER SWEEPSTAKES
February 2008

GRAND PRIZE: 1 WINNER!

From coral gardens to submerged grottos, Endless Ocean's amazing undersea realm could be yours to explore. We'll outfit one lucky winner with all the necessary diving gear, including a Wii console and one copy of Endless Ocean.

Wii
Endless Ocean
Dive. Discover. Dream.

SECOND PRIZE: 10 WINNERS!!!!!!!!!!

Like sushi? Ten winners will get their fill of fish as they cruise the reefs and dive into the abyssal depths with their copy of Endless Ocean for Wii.

TO ENTER: Send us a postcard listing your full name, mailing address, phone number, and email address (if you have one). Address it as follows:

Nintendo Power Sweepstakes v225
c/o Future US
4000 Shoreline Court, Suite 400
South San Francisco, CA 94080

OFFICIAL RULES

1. No purchase is necessary to win and as a contestant you have not yet won. Entries must be received no later than March 1, 2008. The winners will be chosen on or about March 17, 2008, and will be notified by e-mail (or regular mail). The odds of winning depend upon the number of entries received. The sponsor of the contest is Future US, Inc. ("Future US"), 4000 Shoreline Court, South San Francisco, CA 94080. Future US cannot be responsible for lost, late, misdirected, or incomplete entries, nor shall it be liable for unsuccessful efforts to notify a winner.

2. The prizes are the following: The prize that is available for one (1) contestant is a Wii console (of which the MSRP is $249.99) and one retail copy of the Endless Ocean™ Wii software (of which the MSRP is $29.99). The prize that is available for ten (10) contestants is a retail copy of the Endless Ocean™ Wii software (of which the MSRP for each is $29.99). The prizes are nontransferable and no substitutions will be allowed.

3. Winners will be determined by a single random drawing of all valid entries and the decision of Future US shall be final. You may obtain the name of the winner by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to the address above. Future US reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to cancel or suspend this drawing should causes beyond its control corrupt the administration, security, or proper play of the drawing.

4. It is not necessary to buy Nintendo Power magazine to become a contestant. Everyone who mails in an entry will be considered as participants.

5. Entrants must be at least 13 years of age. If a winner is a minor, the prize will be awarded in the name of winner's parent or legal guardian, who is solely responsible for all applicable federal, state and local taxes, and that winner must also provide a signed parental or guardian consent form, provided by the sponsor, within 7 days of notification attempt. Failure of the minor to return the guardian consent form will result in the forfeiture of the prize and selection of an alternate winner, who will be chosen through a random drawing from the remaining eligible entries.

6. Return of any prize or prize notification as undeliverable will result in disqualification and an alternate winner will be selected.

7. The winners may be required to sign an affidavit of eligibility/release of liability/prize acceptance within seven days of receipt; failure to do so upon request will result in forfeiture of the prize. By acceptance of the prize, the winners agree to the use of their name and/or likeness for purposes of advertising, trade, or promotion without further compensation, unless prohibited by law. Winners are responsible for paying any income taxes on the value of the prize received.

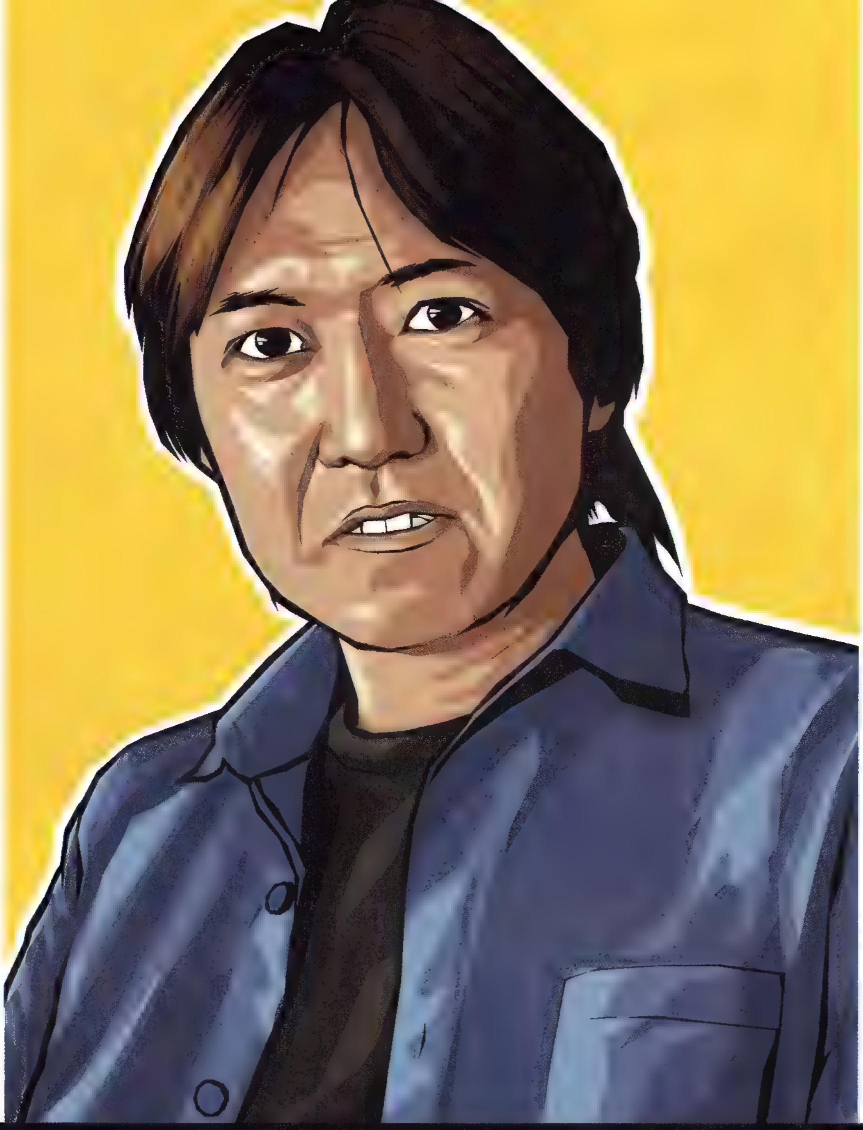
8. Future US is not responsible for any damages or expenses that winners might incur as a result of this contest or the receipt of any prize. In addition, contestants release and hold Future US and its employees harmless from any and all damages and claims of any kind in connection with the contest. Future US reserves the right to confirm all winners for eligibility and compliance with the rules and regulations.

9. This contest is open to residents of the United States only. Void in Vermont, Rhode Island, Puerto Rico, and where prohibited by law.

10. Employees, officers, and directors of Future US, the publisher or their subsidiaries and affiliated companies, and their immediate families and those living in their households, are not eligible.

11. A contestant may enter by printing their name, address, daytime telephone number and e-mail address (if they have one) and the name of the prize drawing on a 3 x 5 card and mailing it to: Nintendo Power Sweepstakes v223, c/o Future US, 4000 Shoreline Court, Suite 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. Only one entry per person will be accepted.

EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB



10

Power Profiles

Takashi Iizuka

For more than 15 years, Sonic the Hedgehog has endured as one of the most popular and beloved series in all of gaming. One of the key creative talents behind the Blue Blur, dating back to his Sega Genesis days, is Takashi Iizuka. Also known for his role as lead designer on NiGHTS into Dreams, Iizuka is now the head of Sonic Team and the man in charge of all things hedgehog.

> *"It's fantastic to watch...your idea taking form and evolving right in front on your eyes."*

NINTENDO POWER: **Can you tell us how you got into the video game business?**

TAKASHI IIZUKA: When I was in college, I had no idea that a position called "game designer" existed. At the time I graduated, Sega was an entertainment company that was involved in toys, games, and, of course, the arcades. I was interested in Sega as a place where I could use my creative ability, so I applied for a job there and was hired straight out of college.

[illegible]
March 16, 1970

[illegible]
Tokyo, Japan

[illegible]
Producer

[illegible]
Producing NiGHTS and Sonic the Hedgehog titles; making dreams come true.

[illegible]
Japanese

[illegible]
Unkown

When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?

I love to draw and write stories, so I always wanted be a manga artist.

How has the video game industry changed during the time that you've been involved with it?

When I joined Sega over a decade ago, video games were very simple and I always enjoyed them for pure fun. Back then, games were really interactive toys. Today, the video game industry seems to be merging into other entertainment sectors like movies, and games are now combining fantastic graphics, complex gameplay, and great story lines. When I was first introduced to game design, we were taught to think about gameplay using just simple shapes like circles and squares. The goal was to create something that was fun without considering the graphics, sound, or any other elements that we take for granted in games today. I think that's been the biggest change since I've been in the industry, and it's changed the way that I think about game design with these other elements in mind.

What aspect of creating a video game do you enjoy the most?

As a game designer, I enjoy putting the ideas I have in my head onto paper. From there, through the talents of artists and programmers, I can see my ideas take shape and form. It's fantastic to watch the whole process of your idea taking form and evolving right in front of your eyes.

When you started at Sega, the company was still a hardware manufacturer. How have things changed for you as a developer since those days?

As a developer for one platform, I never really thought too much about the target audience for our games. Back then, Sega's platform, and especially Sonic, really had its own core audience that we catered to. But now, we have the freedom to choose which platforms we think best fit the games we create.

You've been with Sonic since his Genesis days. What are your fondest memories of working on one of gaming's most celebrated franchises?

I spent my first years working and learning from some of the greatest people who were creating Sonic for Genesis. But my fondest memories have to be when I worked on Sonic Adventure. At that time, Sega was about to release a brand-new console, the Dreamcast, and that was the time it was decided to bring Sonic into the 3-D world. It was a very difficult challenge to take the 2-D side-scrolling action of Sonic into 3-D space, but looking back, those times were the most memorable.

For a long time, you worked alongside Sonic co-creator Yuji Naka. What did you learn from him about the Sonic franchise and about game development in general?

Entering Sega, I worked alongside Yuji Naka for 10 years and learned many invaluable skills that have made me the designer I am today. One of the most important things I will always remember will be how he taught the designers to never act on your first impulse when it comes to general game designs. We learned to always flesh out an idea, thinking about it more dynamically before we took our next steps. For game designers I think this is critical, as it allows you to see the basic design from all angles and get input before any real work is done.

What are your thoughts on Sonic appearing in the upcoming Super Smash Bros. Brawl?

I am really happy to see Sonic appearing in such a big series like Super Smash Bros. It's great to see Sonic amongst the

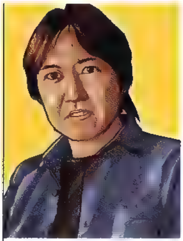
GAMEOGRAPHY

Iizuka has spent his entire career with Sonic Team; his first job after college was as senior designer on Sonic the Hedgehog 3. Most recently, he headed development on NiGHTS: Journey of Dreams.

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 3
1994, SEGA GENESIS
SENIOR DESIGNER

SONIC & KNUCKLES
1994, SEGA GENESIS
SENIOR DESIGNER

NiGHTS INTO DREAMS
1996, SEGA SATURN
LEAD DESIGNER



most recognizable game icon figures like Mario. I think we've been successful in creating games that both Nintendo and Sega fans can play together.

What was the inspiration for the original NiGHTS? Why did Sonic Team decide to create an all-new property for the Sega Saturn rather than a new Sonic the Hedgehog?
When Sega was thinking about the new console, Saturn, Sonic Team was interested in creating a game based on a flying character. Working closely with Yuji Naka, we were inspired to come up with a concept of not just a flying character but a character that could walk on land as well. Once we had the basic concept, it evolved into bringing the character alive in the surreal world of dreams. And that's how NiGHTS was born.

Why do you think NiGHTS struck such a chord with some gamers that they continued to clamor for a sequel more than a decade later?
This really was a game that was created from the ground up. It does not conform to any general game-design specs that we were accustomed to, like taking damage, hitting enemies, or collecting rings. NiGHTS is a very unique game, that even in its absence of 10 years, there is no other game quite like it. So I think that is why NiGHTS has continued to have the following it has for a sequel.

It's not very often that a series comes back after a more than 10-year hiatus. Did you have any difficulties convincing Sega executives to let you make the game?
The Sega executives remembered NiGHTS because it was quite successful in Japan. But because NiGHTS was released near the end of the Saturn era, it took some convincing to support our efforts in getting the sequel the green light. As it turns out, with everyone's gracious support and help, NiGHTS: Journey of Dreams has become the reality I always dreamt of, and hopefully it will generate international appeal for a character that's been waiting 10 years to return.

Now that NiGHTS is finally back, would you like to keep the series going?
I would love nothing better than to create an ongoing series with NiGHTS, much like Sega has done with Sonic. This is a dream of mine, like it was for having the chance to create Journey of Dreams.

Any chance we'll see a Christmas NiGHTS: Journey of Dreams? Please?
I've been asked this question a lot, and I would like to say yes, but realizing that Christmas NiGHTS was created as a promotion for Sega Saturn, it was difficult for us to accomplish this time. But NiGHTS: Journey of Dreams has a very special feature called "My Dream" where there are seasonal events that change the environment. So, if you really look closely, there is some Christmas in the game after all. I hope all the fans will visit "My Dream" and see for themselves.

When you're stumped by a particularly difficult problem while creating a game, what's your process for working through it?
This really depends on what the difficult challenge is at hand. For those difficulties that arise internally in our team, we usually focus to identify the most important aspect of what we're trying to solve. I find that in this way, it allows us to strip away the layers that distract us from the solution to what's really at hand.

What other games or game creators do you most admire or respect, and why?
I would have to put Yuji Naka and Shigeru Miyamoto at the top of my list of creators that I truly admire. Both are pioneers in the game industry, and have introduced us to two of the most iconic game characters and games that have worldwide appeal.

Whose works in other forms of media, such as film or literature, do you most admire or enjoy?
I really enjoy all of the Pixar movies. They are not only visually stunning, but it's the appeal that each title generates from kids to grown-ups alike that I truly admire. That inspires me to want to create games that have this kind of appeal.

What are some of your favorite non-gaming hobbies or pastimes?
I really love scuba diving, but living in northern California I haven't been out in the water much. It's too cold! Once I find some free time, I would love to visit some tropical haven to do some scuba diving. Interestingly enough, I've used my personal diving experience in my level designs for Journey of Dreams. It's helped me visualize the gracefulness of how a diver moves in the water, then interpret that to the way that NiGHTS flies through the air.

If you could have one superpower, what would it be and why?
I love experiencing new and wonderful places that I've never been to, so I'd have to say the power to instantly warp anywhere I want to.

> *"I would love nothing better than to create an ongoing series with NiGHTS, much like Sega has done with Sonic."*

SONIC ADVENTURE
1999, DREAMCAST
DIRECTOR/LEAD DESIGNER

SONIC HEROES
2004, GAMECUBE
DIRECTOR/LEAD DESIGNER

SHADOW THE HEDGEHOG
2005, GAMECUBE
DIRECTOR/LEAD DESIGNER

NiGHTS: JOURNEY OF DREAMS
2007, Wii
PRODUCER/DIRECTOR/LEAD DESIGNER

MY HORSE & ME

GROOM

TRAIN

COMPETE

SUPPORTED BY FEI
International Equestrian Federation
Fédération Equestre Internationale

ATARI

EVERYONE
E
Visit www.esrb.org for more ratings information
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

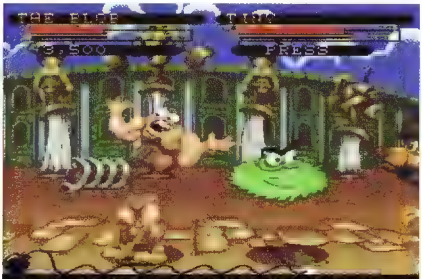
Wii NINTENDO DS. Games for Windows W!Games

© 2007 Atari Europe SASU All rights reserved © 2007 Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI). Reproduced with the permission of the FEI All rights reserved Reproduction without permission is prohibited by law. Wii & PC Developed by W! Games Nintendo DS Developed by Mistic Software Inc Marketed and distributed by Atari, Inc New York, NY Atari and the Atari logo are trademarks owned by Atari Interactive, Inc All Rights Reserved The ESRB rating icons are registered trademarks of the Entertainment Software Association. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners Wii and Nintendo DS are trademarks of Nintendo. Windows and the Windows Vista start button logo are registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and/or other countries and "Games for Windows" and the Windows Vista start button logo are used under license from Microsoft

CLAY FIGHTER

SUPER NINTENDO

Serious fighting games, beware—your clay of reckoning has come.



Oh Tiny, we barely knew ya. Maybe this is why the bodybuilder didn't appear in any of the Clay Fighter sequels.

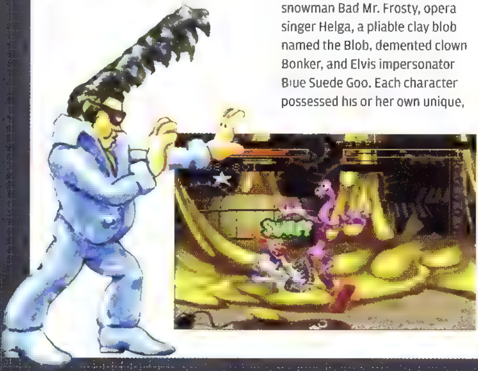
PLATFORM: SUPER NES
DEVELOPER: VISUAL CONCEPTS
PUBLISHER: INTERPLAY
RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER 1993
COVERED IN ISSUES: 51, 55, 67
SEQUELS: 63 1/3

In 1993, gamers were looking for a fight. Street Fighter II, Fatal Fury, and Art of Fighting were all the rage (along with plenty of lesser one-on-one 2-D fighting games), and senators were pulling out their hair over the animated blood in Mortal Kombat. Amidst all the violence and pseudo-realistic martial arts, Interplay entered the fray with a game that bucked every stylistic trend at the time: Clay Fighter.

While Clay Fighter relied on the conventions of the genre—two fighters squared off, utilizing a wide array of punches, kicks, and special moves executed by combinations of the joystick and buttons until one of the fighters' life bars was depleted—it stood out through its use of striking digitized claymation visuals and comedic presentation. Instead of flying blood there were flying chunks of clay; instead of karate masters, ninja babes, and vengeful brutes, players controlled deranged denizens of a clay circus. According to the game's story, a clay meteor fell from space, giving birth to eight playable characters including evil snowman Bad Mr. Frosty, opera singer Helga, a pliable clay blob named the Blob, demented clown Bonker, and Elvis impersonator Blue Suede Goo. Each character possessed his or her own unique, bizarre moves that took advantage of the clay motif—such as Frosty's extendable arm and the Blob's ability to transform into a saw blade that cut opponents in half.

Though the clay graphics were a big part of the game's hook, its sound was arguably even more impressive. The characters had unique, clear voice samples to accompany their actions ("Don't be cruel now!" blurts Blue Suede Goo as he blasts foes with musical notes), an announcer introduced the combatants, and the festivities were kicked off with an opening theme song complete with vocals. The game sounded incredible for its time and still holds up today. Also noteworthy: Clay Fighter was one of the early efforts from developer Visual Concepts, which went on to create the renowned Sega Sports titles.

Clay Fighter is never going to go down as one of the all-time great fighting games—the collision is imprecise, the AI is cheap, and the animation's on the choppy side—but it deserves to be remembered for standing out amongst the crowd. —**CHRIS H.**



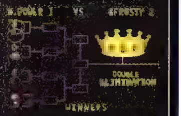
Pokey? Where'd you go?

TOURNEY TIME

Clay Fighter was successful enough that Interplay followed it up a year later with Clay Fighter: Tournament Edition—basically the same game with a few upgrades. Tournament Edition was exclusive to Blockbuster Video stores.

NEW INTRO:
In the original game, the introductory story was told with text only. New cut-scenes were added for Tournament Edition.

NEW BACKGROUNDS:
Many of the fighting arenas were modified from the original game. The giant face in Blue Suede Goo's stage was grotesque!



TOURNAMENT MODE:
As the name implies, the big addition was a tournament mode that allowed eight players to compete in several types of tournaments. You could rename your character to avoid confusion.

HAVE A FAVORITE CLASSIC GAME YOU'D LIKE TO SEE REVISITED?
Send us your requests—we'll consider them for a future installment of Playback. nintendopower@futureus.com

YOU FOUND THE OCARINA!

Sweet Potato Ocarina 5 holes (octave + 1), includes Songbook I/Tutorial/Songs from the Game	$39.95
Extended Range Sweet Potato 6 holes (octave + 4), includes Extended Range Songbook plus Songbook I/Tutorial/Songs from the Game	$49.95
Extended Range Sweet Potato XL Bigger and deeper sounding!	$59.95
Raku Pendant Ocarina (with necklace and songbook)	$24.95
Eagle Bone Flute (cast in porcelin, simple to play, w/ necklace and playing instruction)	$29.95
Silk Carrying Case padded w/ zipper, handle and embroidered dragons Fits all ocarinas	$5.95
Ocarina Enchantment CD Available for download only from our website	$9.95
Wishbone Flute Musical wishes bring horse tail swishes! Express your elf! 5" long Songbook included.	$29.95
Extra Ocarina Songbooks Songbook II, Christmas Carols, Beatles for Extended Range	$2.95 ea

SHIPPING INFO

Shipping & Handling $6 (2-3 weeks for delivery)
PRIORITY Shipping $12 (2-7 biz days for delivery)
We ship via US Postal Service

**Order via our Website
or call Toll Free!
1-866-899-4046**

Songbird Ocarinas

2711 East 11th St. Los Angeles, CA 90023
www.songbirdocarina.com

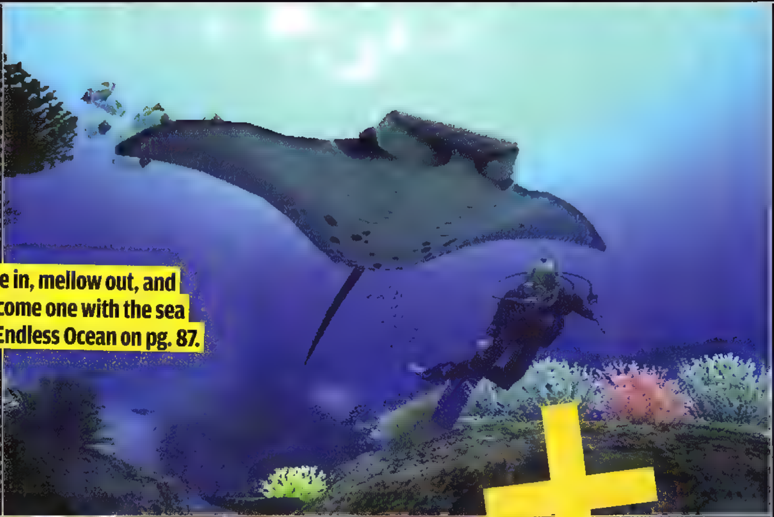
- Easy To Play
- Ceramic Flute
- Songbook/Tutorial Included
- Minuets, Serenades, Requiems
- Handmade in U.S.A.

Songbird Ocarinas not affiliated or endorsed by Nintendo of America, Inc.

The Best New Web Videos
Every Day
Garbage Free
Find Something Good
gloob.tv
fresh hand-picked web videos

REVIEWS

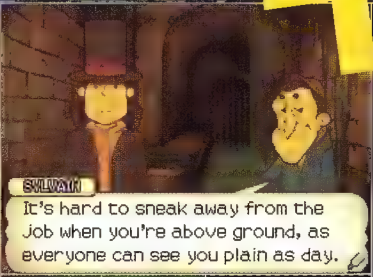
IN-DEPTH REVIEWS OF ALL THE LATEST GAMES



Dive in, mellow out, and become one with the sea in Endless Ocean on pg. 87.

Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games, Nitro Bike, Bomberman Land Touch! 2, and more.

90
Sonic Riders: Zero Gravity is tough to learn but fun to master.



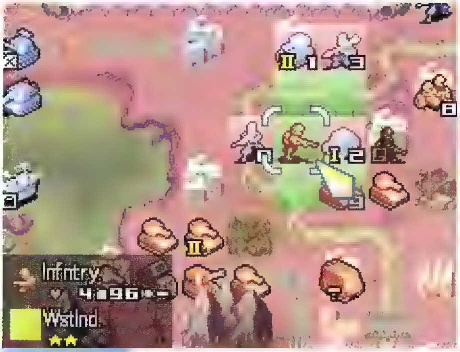
SYLVAIN

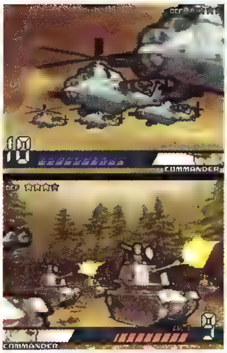
It's hard to sneak away from the job when you're above ground, as everyone can see you plain as day.

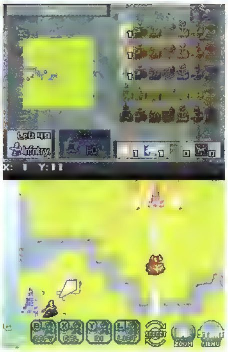
88
Ponder puzzles in Professor Layton and the Curious Village.

86
The end of the world can't stop the battle in Advance Wars: Days of Ruin.

87
Join the Straw Hat Pirates in One Piece: Unlimited Adventure.







Apocalypse Wow

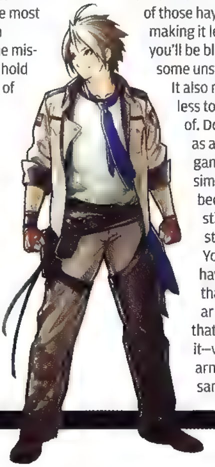
ADVANCE WARS: DAYS OF RUIN

RATING: 8.5
PLATFORM: DS
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS
ESRB: EVERYONE 10+

If there were anything like the gaming equivalent of comfort food, Advance Wars would be it. Now on its fourth iteration, gamers know what to expect from the franchise—a solid tactical warfare game that doesn't demand too much, but doesn't leave you unsatisfied, either. There isn't a lot of gameplay innovation in Days of Ruin—a few new vehicles and some fresh changes on the battlefield to give your brain something to chew on, but most of what you'll see is comfortingly the same as before.

While there's a lot of gameplay similarity to previous Advance Wars titles, Days of Ruin's story does go in a grim new direction. The events begin immediately after a meteor strike, eliminating most of the population and throwing the world into utter chaos. Skirmishes over food and medicine, as well as an interest to renew a civil war between countries that no longer exist, serve as the backbone for the battles. The characters are a little rote—the timid but overachieving boy, the tough and principled mentor, the sworn enemy, and the greater threat lurking in the shadows. Fortunately, the story plays with these pieces better than a lot of other stories have; the temptation to discuss further details of the plot is excruciating, but it wouldn't be possible to do so without exposing some massive spoilers. I'll just say this: so often in video games (and previous Advance Wars titles are not excluded from this), the plot feels practically unrelated to the action events; but for the most part, Days of Ruin excels because the missions themselves hold the key moments of the plot together.

But while the missions are smartly tied to the story, sometimes the winning strategy seems exceedingly narrow. Too often you have to play a level over and over again until you figure out the precise steps to victory. Or you can throw a ton of manpower at your enemy and wear him down through long, slogged-out battles. Either way, you feel like you're rewarded only for figuring out how the developers wanted you to play, not for creativity.



In general, the battles seem more approachable than before, however. Dual Strike introduced a lot of cataclysmic weaponry and CO Powers, highly specific abilities that could turn the tide of battle and lay waste to carefully laid plans. Thankfully, Days of Ruin reduces the effectiveness of some of those haymaker attacks, making it less likely that you'll be blindsided by some unstoppable force. It also means you have less to keep track of. Don't take this as a sign that the game has been simplified, though, because there's still plenty to strategize over. You also don't have to worry that one side's army has units that are specific to it—virtually all the armies have the same equipment, making battles more comprehensible.

When you play Days of Ruin, it feels like the DS was designed with this franchise in mind. The value of having two screens is maximized—the packed upper screen gives you important data about your troops and the terrain, while the lower screen displays the action. The frustrating components of Dual Strike's handling of the touch screen are gone in Days of Ruin; you always feel like you're in total control.

To top it off, Days of Ruin takes wireless connectivity and Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection further than any game that has preceded it. With a few minor exceptions (namely the number of people who can play simultaneously), you can do everything via Wi-Fi that you can do via local wireless. You can go head-to-head with your friends in virtually any way conceivable—skirmish on custom-made stages, trade maps for a friend to play by himself, or post and download top-ranked stages from the Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection central depository. Throw in constant voice chat over Wi-Fi so you can harass your opponent when he's taking too long on his turn. It's wireless gaming on the DS at its finest. —CHRIS SH.

WRITERS' BLOCK

WHAT NEW FEATURES WOULD YOU LIKE TO ADD TO CLASSIC GAMES ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE?

[illegible]

I'd like to use the Wii Photo Channel to add custom face mapping to the characters in THQ's classic N64 wrestling games.

[illegible]

I'd love to see Duck Hunt adapted for use with the Zapper. And while they're at it, make it so we can shoot that stupid dog every time he mocks our poor hunting skills.

[illegible]

I'd apply Wii Sports Boxing's motion controls to Punch-Out!! The classic's great sense of timing and character would be the perfect compliment to real boxing-style moves.

[illegible]

Mario Paint with Wii remote functionality seems like a no-brainer. You could even share your masterpieces with the world via Wi-Fi.

[illegible]

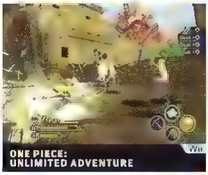
Whether it's to update Pokémon Snap, Super Mario 64, or some other classic Virtual Console game, I think it would be exceptionally cool to be able to swap out classic characters for your own Miis.

[illegible]

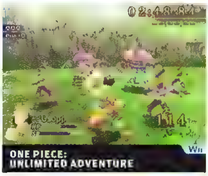
I'd like to see online support added to Street Fighter II. Just imagine playing that classic fighting game against people all over the world!

[illegible]

I've always wanted a level editor for the original Super Mario Bros. Throwing a few pits and pipes down would take no time at all, and the possibilities would be endless.



ONE PIECE: UNLIMITED ADVENTURE



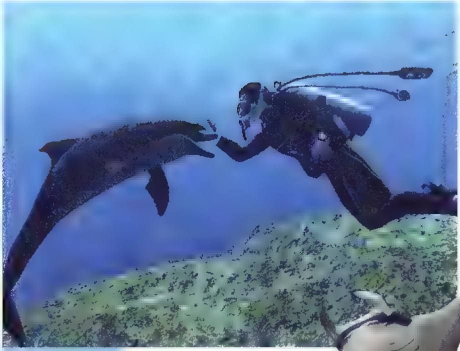
ONE PIECE: UNLIMITED ADVENTURE

ONE PIECE: UNLIMITED ADVENTURE

RATING: 6.5
PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: NAMCO BANDAI
DEVELOPER: GANBARION
ESRB: TEEN

Exploration is the name of the game in One Piece: Unlimited Adventure. The Straw Hat pirates (including Franky, a character that, at press time, has yet to appear in the American version of the anime) find themselves crashing into a mysterious island that is rife with mysteries to unravel and old foes to confront (a great bit of fan service—especially since those characters are later playable in the game's versus mode). More importantly, it's an island filled with all manner of flora and fauna to collect—by using a pickaxe, insect net, or fishing pole—which is needed to unlock and explore even more new areas.

As promising as this *Lost*-meets-Animal Crossing premise sounds, however, the game as a whole becomes a bit tedious. While backtracking through areas to collect specific items would be a pretty minor annoyance in itself (except when you aren't sure what you're looking for or where to find it), the re-spawning enemies make it a chore. I ended up running away from many fights later in the game and just hunted for items. Sure, my characters didn't level up as quickly, but I also wasn't bogged down by repetitive fighting that suffered from the occasional bout of slowdown. JUSTIN C.



[illegible]

Enhance Your Calm

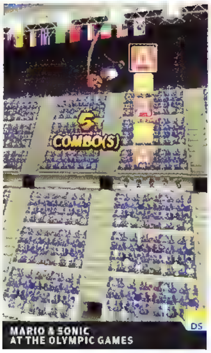
ENDLESS OCEAN

RATING: 7.5
PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: ARIKA
ESRB: EVERYONE

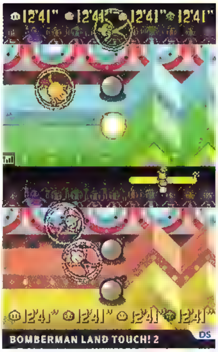
When you come face to fin with a six-gill shark or a sperm whale emerging from the inky depths of the abyss, you don't think about gaming goals or Endless Ocean's lack of them. You think, "Is it going to attack?" or "Wow. That's big!" There's an element of wonder and discovery about Endless Ocean that's often missing from video games because so many are designed just to get players from point A to point B. But from the moment you jump off the Gabbiano (your dive boat) and enter the peaceful, blue world of the Manoa Lai Sea, you'll pretty much choose where to go, how long to stay there, and what to do next. There are small goals, such as being a good dive guide, and you'll encounter fun story-based activities such as taking snapshots of specific species for a friend. You can even uncover the basis of ancient local legends by discovering artifacts in a sunken city.

Whether you're aboard the ship encouraging dolphins to perform backflips or cruising along a coral reef, the Wii remote's motion-based controls feel natural and intuitive, but using the Control Pad and various buttons often requires thumb-straining reaches. Consequently, as you struggle to push the correct button, you'll often move the remote, causing the camera to spin around enough to disorient you. Although that can be frustrating, your ever-present compass will help you regain your bearings quickly. The game's soothing, dreamy melodies present a second insidious obstacle: they will likely lull you to sleep. Fortunately, you can plug in an SD card loaded with more-stirring tunes.

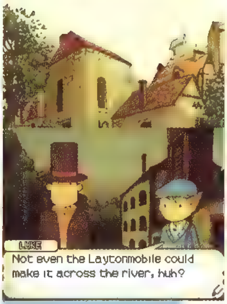
The game's absence of goals won't please everyone. If you want drama, suspense, and action, you'll have to swim elsewhere. But if you focus on the journey rather than the destination, you may find yourself looking forward to exploring Endless Ocean over and over again. In spite of the game's quirks, I certainly do. —SCOTT P.



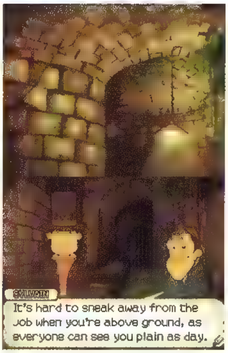
MARIO & SONIC AT THE OLYMPIC GAMES



BOMBERMAN LAND TOUCH! 2


LUKE

Not even the Laytonmobile could make it across the river, huh?


SYLVAIN

It's hard to sneak away from the job when you're above ground, as everyone can see you plain as day.

MARIO & SONIC AT THE OLYMPIC GAMES

RATING: 7.5

PLATFORM: DS

PUBLISHER: SEGA

DEVELOPER: SEGA

ESRB: EVERYONE

Like its Wii predecessor, the DS version of Mario and Sonic's Olympics-themed minigame collection is good but not great, although the action seems to fit a little better with the handheld. Speed-rubbing the screen with the stylus is much less tiring and more precise than pumping your Wii remote, and the game moves at a snappier pace that makes zipping through its bite-sized nuggets of action more enjoyable. The setup is almost identical to the Wii title, with matching modes, the same 16 Mario and Sonic series characters, and most of the same Olympic events. There are a few nice additions, such as cycling and 10m platform (diving), the latter of which is a new favorite of mine. However, most events are just okay, and none are truly amazing.

With plenty of medals, trophies, emblems, and crowns to earn, there's as much depth as you could hope for from a game of this type. The 15 sets of events in Circuit mode and the character-specific challenges in Mission mode will take a while to complete, and you can always try to better your event records and raise your standings on the game's worldwide Wi-Fi Connection leaderboards.

Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games is packed with features, provides solid multiplayer fun, is well suited to gaming on the go, and is an overall high-quality production. It doesn't quite live up to the historic pairing of gaming's two biggest icons, but then again, not much could. —CHRIS SL.

BOMBERMAN LAND TOUCH! 2

RATING: 6.0

PLATFORM: DS

PUBLISHER: HUDSON

DEVELOPER: HUDSON

ESRB: EVERYONE

If you had a blast with the first Bomberman Land Touch!, you're in luck—the sequel is almost the exact same thing. As in its predecessor, in Touch! 2 you run around a theme park and play a wide variety of touch-driven minigames to earn access to new parts of the park, thus allowing you to play new minigames and continue the cycle. Some of the minigames are even recycled from the previous title. The new ones are decent fun, but few are spectacular; the rhythm-based Boom Tunes is one of the few truly fun additions.

Beyond story mode, Battle mode presents the traditional versus competition that Bomberman is known for. The action is solid, and there are plenty of maps and options (including Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection play), but there's little that series fans haven't seen before. —CHRIS H.

Thought Provoking

PROFESSOR LAYTON AND THE CURIOUS VILLAGE

RATING: 8.5

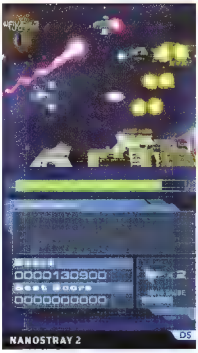
PLATFORM: DS

PUBLISHER: NINTENDO

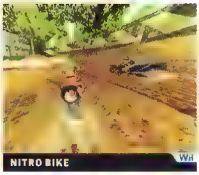
DEVELOPER: LEVEL-5

ESRB: EVERYONE

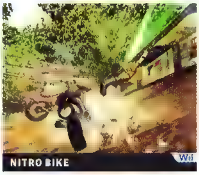
"I'll be done in just a few minutes," I told one of my colleagues as he was leaving the office for the evening. An hour and a half later I still hadn't pried myself away from Professor Layton and the Curious Village. And not because I was stumped (although the game does contain plenty of brain-straining challenge)—because I was absolutely hooked; I kept wanting to solve "just one more puzzle." Not everyone will get addicted to Professor Layton's critical-thinking puzzles like I did, but those that do will find it captivating. Finally there's a brain game for gamers—one that mixes its puzzles with point-and-click exploration, memorable characters, and a touching, surprisingly poignant story. Playing as the likeable Professor Layton and his apprentice, Luke, you'll sharpen your mind with more than 120 brain-teasers that include optical illusions, logic problems, math, geometry, wordplay, observation-based tasks, spatial reasoning, and a lot more. While some take nothing more than thinking to determine the answer, others implement the DS's touch functionality, such as sliding puzzle pieces, moving matchsticks, and tracing shapes. It's the framework, however, that makes the game so compelling; the village of St. Mystere and its kooky inhabitants offer actual reasons for playing through puzzle after puzzle (even if the reasons are often flimsy), and the mysteries you encounter (Murder! Kidnapping! And more!) and subsequently solve make the game especially hard to put down. The unique European-style aesthetic provides some great visual punch, and things look even better in the cut-scenes; the movie-quality animation is reminiscent of Hayao Miyazaki's famed Studio Ghibli. On top of a great adventure mode, Professor Layton offers additional downloadable content, which should keep players plenty busy until the promised sequel arrives. —CHRIS H.



NANOSTRAY 2 DS



NITRO BIKE Wii



NITRO BIKE Wii

NANOSTRAY 2

RATING: 6.0

PLATFORM: **DS**
PUBLISHER: **MAJESCO**
DEVELOPER: **SHIN'EN**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

The shooter genre has enjoyed somewhat of a revival as of late thanks to the plethora of TurboGrafx-16 games that have been released on Virtual Console. But compared to flashy new shooters, most legacy titles don't stack up. Nanostray 2 is an odd mix of old and new; it looks and plays better than any of those old games, and it has the polish of a fresh title, but its brand of twitchy, frenetic action and one-hit deaths is so 1985.

The game puts forth as much effort as it can muster to create a pleasing experience—the adventure stages are packed with crazy enemies and thumb-testing obstacles. There are also challenge missions (that tend to feel more like puzzles) where you have to remember the sequence of appearing enemies rather than simply trying to survive. Like much of the game, these missions can be more maddening than fun. There's two-player multiplayer, as well, including a co-op mode through the main missions; unfortunately, your ships are hampered by having fewer power-ups when playing co-op, and there is noticeable slowdown, which is beyond brutal in a fast-paced shooter like Nanostray. The online leaderboards will be nice for the people who can endure enough cheap kills to get truly good.

CHRIS SH.

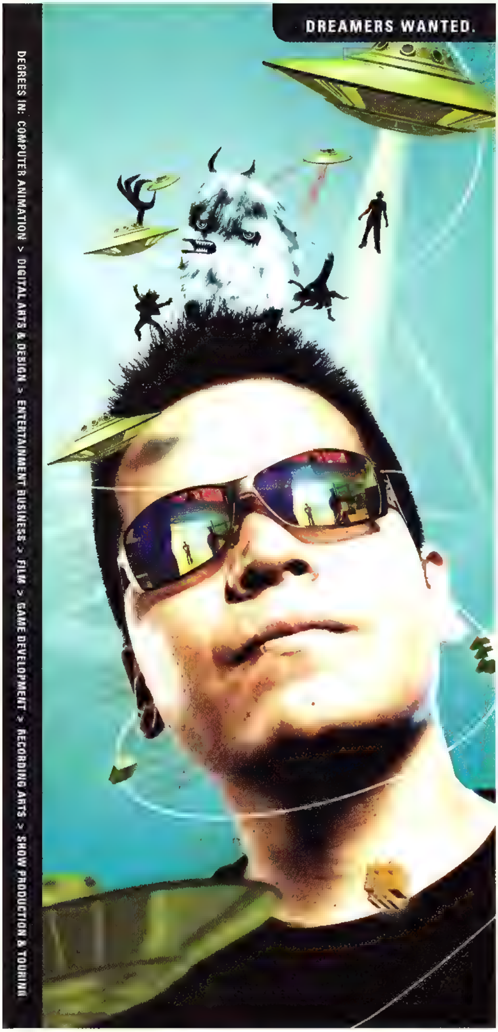
NITRO BIKE

RATING: 3.5

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **LEFT FIELD**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

The makers of Excitebike 64 return to the motocross circuit with a disappointing wreck of a Wii game. Given the developers' pedigree, you'd expect them to avoid such disastrous combinations as touchy motion controls, narrow track designs, and courses littered with stuff to crash into. And why place a greater emphasis on making hairpin turns than on grabbing big air and pulling off tricks? This was obviously intended as the spiritual successor to the Excitebike franchise, but confounding and often frustrating design choices keep it well short of achieving that goal. The lackluster visuals certainly don't help matters, nor do the frame-rate stutters that occur when too many bikes appear onscreen at once. Top it all off with some generic "extreme" character designs, and you've got one of the most unappealing racers ever to appear on the console.

—STEVE T.


DREAMERS WANTED.
DEGREES IN: COMPUTER ANIMATION > DIGITAL ARTS & DESIGN > ENTERTAINMENT BUSINESS > FILM > GAME DEVELOPMENT > RECORDING ARTS > SHOW PRODUCTION & TOURING

SCHOOL OF GAME DEVELOPMENT

800.226.7625 | 3300 University Boulevard • Winter Park, FL 32792

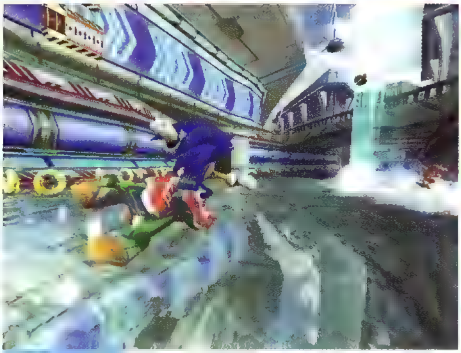
Financial aid available to those who qualify • Career development assistance • Accredited School, ACCSCT

ONE OF THE TOP FIVE GAME-DEGREE PROGRAMS IN THE WORLD
—Electronic Gaming Monthly

FULL SAIL
Real World Education

fullsail.com

© 2006 Full Sail Inc. All rights reserved.



Sonic Vroom

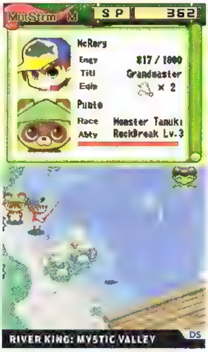
SONIC RIDERS: ZERO GRAVITY

RATING: 7.0
PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: SEGA
DEVELOPER: SONIC TEAM
ESRB: EVERYONE

As with the original Sonic Riders, a large segment of the gaming populace will likely find Zero Gravity immensely frustrating. This unorthodox hoverboard racer throws you into a maelstrom of barely controlled chaos, and it feels very unforgiving when you're first starting out. But if you have the patience to stick with it and learn the intricacies of the mechanics, riding that edge can be pretty exhilarating. The action moves at a breakneck pace, each track offers tons of crazy shortcuts, and the new gravity powers let you perform some outlandish stunts (like racing along walls). For the most part, the motion controls are up to the task, though you do have the option to use a GameCube controller if you prefer. Despite an impressive draw distance and some fairly complex course designs, the frame rate holds steady as well.

Alongside the main Story campaign, Zero Gravity offers a variety of play modes and copious unlockables to keep you busy. Longtime Sega fans will especially dig some of the bonus courses, and the final roster includes just about every major character in the Sonic universe (as well as a certain purple jester). It's a bit ridiculous how much new boards cost, though; even after completing both Story circuits, I had collected enough rings for only one new ride. My other big complaints are that the sprawling, multi-tiered tracks can be a bit confusing at times, and it's annoying how adept CPU racers are at finding shortcuts.

In the end, how much you get out of Zero Gravity depends on how much you put into it. If you have the patience to hone your skills, you'll find a unique, satisfying, and addictive racer waiting for you at the finish line.
—STEVE T.



RIVER KING: MYSTIC VALLEY

RATING: 7.0
PLATFORM: DS
PUBLISHER: NATSUME
DEVELOPER: MARVELOUS INTERACTIVE
ESRB: EVERYONE

A standby on Nintendo handhelds since Game Boy Color, River King has taken to DS touch control like a fish to water. As you journey to save fishing kid Senri's sister from a deep sleep by catching the legendary River King, you zigzag across a wooded valley to drop your hook into a series of rivers and streams. You can cast a line with a flick of the stylus, but pressing the A Button is easier. The real touch-controlled action comes with trying to bring in a fish that has already taken the bait. By repeatedly drawing a circle on the touch screen, you simulate the motion of a fishing reel. A meter shows the tension on the line. If it fills to the top, the line will snap, so you have to give your prey slack as you keep it hooked, and move your stylus to the sides of the screen to pull the fish to the center. There's a lot of play in the fishing mechanic, and that's good because you'll fish about as often as you would expect to fight monsters in a traditional RPG. The big difference between fishing and fighting is that you don't have to coax monsters into attacking you. In River King, much of your time is spent waiting for the fish to bite. It's realistic, but not fun, and it's frustrating after you've watched several fish swim past your hook. You can increase your chances of attracting fish by using the cash you earn from your catches to buy better equipment. Money-earning progress is slow at first because you have to spend the bulk of your winnings on bait, but it picks up once you can afford a rod that allows you to use lures. Animal buddies help you pass obstacles and (along with a host of characters that you meet on the road) add comic relief to endless fishing trips. If it's human companionship you seek, you can set up multiplayer fishing tournaments via a local wireless session or Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection.
—GEORGE S.

FURU FURU PARK
Wii

MY HORSE AND ME
Wii

ALSO THIS MONTH

Try your hand at 30 crazy mini-games in Majesco's **Furu Furu Park** for Wii.... Hit the ice in **Kidz Sports: Ice Hockey**, the first hockey game for Wii.... Ubisoft is bringing the popular TV drama to Wii with **CSI: Hard Evidence**.... If you've ever wanted to own a horse, you'll have your chance in **My Horse and Me** on Wii and DS.... Animal lovers can also try Ubisoft's **Puppy Palace** on DS.... For something completely different, there's **Miami Nights: Singles in the City**, a socializing game for DS.... **Brain Challenge** for DS will test your mental acumen.... Are you tired of getting smarter from playing all those brain-training games? The DS adaptation of **Jackass** is sure to drop your IQ a few points.

ATTENTION GEARHEADS!

$2000 in Monthly Prizes!

MOD SHOP

BUILD. BATTLE. BRAG.

MAXIMUM PC'S MOD SHOP
IS NOW OPEN FOR BUSINESS!

ARE YOU A HARDWARE HACKER?
Visit www.modshop.net to enter your rig in our monthly modding contest, where you can win part of a **$2000 prize pool.**

SEE THE NET'S MOST AMAZING RIGS!
Come to the Mod Shop and check out the top rigs on the net, and vote to determine the ultimate winner.

WWW.MODSHOP.NET

[ARCHIVE]

SWEET DREAMS

NiGHTS, one of our all-time favorite Sega Saturn games, finally got a sequel with NiGHTS: Journey of Dreams for Wii. And, as the 9.0 we gave it proves, it was definitely worth the wait. Other than that, last month was pretty slow overall—the second-highest scoring game was Warhammer 40,000: Squad Command for DS (8.0), with the rest of the games scoring as high as 7.5 and as low as 3.0. Of course, that's to be expected now that the holiday rush is over. Don't fret too much, though: there are still plenty of great games on the way.

SCORES REFLECT INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS' OPINIONS.
• INDICATES WI-FI COMPATIBLE

Wii				
Alien Syndrome	6.0	Sega	220	T
Alvin and the Chipmunks	N/A	Brash	224	E
• Battalion Wars 2	7.5	Nintendo	222	T
Ben 10: Protector of Earth	N/A	D3PA	223	E10+
The Bigs	6.0	2K Sports	218	E
Bionicle Heroes	5.0	Eidos	216	E10+
Blazing Angels: Squadrons of WWII	7.0	Ubisoft	215	T
Bleach: Shattered Blade	N/A	Sega	222	T
Boogie	5.5	Electronic Arts	220	E10+
Brunswick Pro Bowling	6.0	Crave	219	E
Bust-a-Move Bash!	6.5	Majesco	217	E
Carnival Games	7.0	Global Star	220	E
Code Lyoko: Quest for Infinity	N/A	The Game Factory	223	E10+
Cooking Mama: Cook Off	7.5	Majesco	216	E
Cosmic Family	N/A	Ubisoft	215	E
Cranium Kabookii	N/A	Ubisoft	224	E
Crash of the Titans	6.5	Sierra	221	E10+
Cruis'n	N/A	Midway	224	E
Dave Mirra BMX Challenge	4.0	Crave	220	E
• Dewy's Adventure	7.0	Konami	221	E
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai Tenkaichi 2	7.0	Atari	211	T
Dance Dance Revolution: Hottest Party	8.0	Konami	221	E10+
Donkey Kong: Barrel Blast	6.5	Nintendo	221	E
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai Tenkaichi 3	N/A	Atari	223	T
Driver: Parallel Lines	5.0	Ubisoft	219	M
Escape from Bug Island!	3.5	Eidos	217	M
• FIFA 08	N/A	Electronic Arts	222	E
Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn	9.5	Nintendo	222	E10+
Game Party	N/A	Midway	224	E
• Geometry Wars: Galaxies	8.0	Sierra	222	E
• Ghost Squad	7.0	Sega	223	T
The Godfather: Blackhand Edition	8.0	Electronic Arts	216	M
Godzilla Unleashed	5.5	Atari	223	E10+
The Golden Compass	4.0	Sega	224	E10+
Guilty Gear XX Accent Core	8.0	Aksys Games	222	T
• Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock	9.0	Activision	222	T
Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix	7.0	Electronic Arts	218	E10+
Harvey Birdman: Attorney at Law	6.5	Capcom	224	T
Heatseeker	7.5	Codemasters	215	T
High School Musical: Sing It!	N/A	Disney Interactive	223	E
Indoor Sports	N/A	Konami	223	E
Indy 500 Legends	N/A	Destineer	223	E
Jenga	N/A	Atari	223	E
Kawasaki Quad Bikes	N/A	Destineer	223	E
Kidz Sports: Basketball	N/A	Destineer	224	E
Kororinpa: Marble Mania	7.0	Hudson Soft/ Konami	215	E
Legend of the Dragon	5.5	The Game Factory	218	T
LEGO Star Wars: The Complete Saga	N/A	LucasArts	222	E
Link's Crossbow Training	6.5	Nintendo	223	T
Looney Tunes: Acme Arsenal	3.5	W8 Games	221	E10+
• Madden NFL 08	8.0	Electronic Arts	220	E
Manhunt 2	7.5	Rockstar Games	223	M
• Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games	7.5	Sega	223	E
Mario Party 8	7.5	Nintendo	217	E
• Mario Strikers Charged	8.5	Nintendo	219	E10+
• Medal of Honor Heroes 2	8.0	Electronic Arts	223	T
Medal of Honor: Vanguard	6.0	Electronic Arts	217	T
Meet the Robinsons	6.5	Buena Vista	215	E10+
Mercury Meltdown Revolution	6.0	Ignition	221	E
Metroid Prime 3: Corruption	10	Nintendo	220	T
MLB Power Pros	6.5	2K Sports	222	E
Mortal Kombat: Armageddon	8.0	Midway	217	M
• MX vs. ATV Untamed	6.0	THQ	224	E
My Word Coach	N/A	Ubisoft	223	E
MySims	7.0	Electronic Arts	221	E
Namco Museum Remix	N/A	Namco Bandai	222	E
Naruto: Clash of Ninja Revolution	7.0	Tomy/D3PA	222	T
Need For Speed ProStreet	8.0	Electronic Arts	223	E10+
Nicktoons: Attack of the Toybots	N/A	THQ	223	E
• NiGHTS: Journey of Dreams	9.0	Sega	224	E
Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End	4.5	Disney Interactive	217	T
• Pokémon Battle Revolution	6.5	Nintendo	218	E
Prince of Persia: Rival Swords	7.0	Ubisoft	215	T
Puzzle Quest: Challeng of the Warlords	N/A	D3PA	224	E10+
Ratatouille	7.5	THQ	218	E
• Rayman Raving Rabbids 2	6.5	Ubisoft	223	E10+
Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles	8.0	Capcom	223	M
Resident Evil 4: Wii Edition	9.0	Capcom	218	M
Rockstar Games Presents Table Tennis	N/A	Rockstar	222	E
Samurai Warriors: Katana	7.5	Koei	224	T
Scarface: The World Is Yours	7.5	Sierra	218	M
Showtime Championship Boxing	N/A	Jack of All Games	224	E10+
The Simpsons Game	4.0	Electronic Arts	223	T
Smarty Pants	N/A	Electronic Arts	223	E
Sonic and the Secret Rings	8.5	Sega	214	E
Soulcalibur Legends	6.5	Namco Bandai	223	T
Spider-Man 3	6.0	Activision	217	T
SSX Blur	8.5	Electronic Arts	215	E
Super Mario Galaxy	9.5	Nintendo	223	E
Super Paper Mario	9.5	Nintendo	216	E
Super Swing Golf Season 2	6.5	Tecmo	224	E10+
Surf's Up	6.0	Ubisoft	217	E10+
Tamagotchi: Party On!	2.5	Namco Bandai	217	E
Thrillville: Off the Rails	N/A	LucasArts	222	E
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	8.0	Electronic Arts	221	E
TMNT	5.0	Ubisoft	215	E10+
Tomb Raider Anniversary	6.5	Eidos	223	T
Transformers: The Game	5.5	Activision	219	T
Trauma Center: New Blood	8.0	Atlus	223	T
Victorious Boxers: Revolution	N/A	XSEED	222	T
Wii Play	7.0	Nintendo	213	E
Wing Island	5.5	Hudson Soft/ Konami	215	E
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2008	6.5	THQ	222	T
Zack & Wiki: Quest for Barbaros' Treasure	9.0	Capcom	222	E
NINTENDO GAMECUBE				
Meet the Robinsons	N/A	Buena Vista	215	E10+
Radio Allergy	5.0	O~3	215	E
Shrek Smash N' Crash Racing	N/A	Activision	213	E10+
TMNT	N/A	Ubisoft	214	E10+
NINTENDO DS				
Alvin and the Chipmunks	N/A	Brash	223	E
American Girl: Julie Finds a Way	N/A	THQ	224	E
Are you Smarter Than a 5th Grader?	N/A	THQ	223	E
Arthur and the Invisibles	N/A	Atari	213	E
Balls of Fury	N/A	Destination Software	222	E10+
• Bleach: The Blade of Fate	8.5	Sega	222	T
Boogie	7.0	Electronic Arts	224	E10+
Brothers In Arms DS	9.0	Ubisoft	218	T

REVIEWER NOTES

YOSHI'S ISLAND DS

When I first played this game I burned out before beating every challenge, but from time to time I let it punish me some more in my quest for full completion. For a regular playthrough Yoshi's Island DS is brilliant, but those that dare tackle its hardest coin, flower, and star-collecting stages will uncover frustratingly unfair level designs. —CHRIS SL.

STAR TREK CONQUEST

This turn-based strategy game squanders an intriguing premise with its overly simplistic approach, terrible AI, and complete lack of narrative.

—STEVE T.

WWE SMACKDOWN VS. RAW 2008 (DS)

The DS version of WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2008 is anything but the same old thing. Executing moves by tapping, spinning, and dragging on the touch screen is unique and fairly fun; the game looks good, too. The similar characters and limited options in any given situation, however, ensure repetitive matches. More specialty bouts (cage matches, ladder matches, etc.) would have spiced things up. —CHRIS H.

Build-A-Bear Workshop	N/A	The Game Factory	223	E
Cake Mania	5.5	Majesco	216	E
Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	N/A	Activision	223	T
Cartoon Network Racing	N/A	The Game Factory	213	E
Chibi-Robo: Park Patrol	8.5	Nintendo	221	E
Code Lyoko	7.0	The Game Factory	218	E10+
Contra 4	8.5	Konami	222	T
Cookie & Cream	6.5	Agetec	217	E
Corvette Evolution GT	N/A	Jack of All Games	223	E
Cooking Mama 2: Dinner with Friends	7.0	Majesco	223	E
• Custom Robo Arena	7.5	Nintendo	215	E10+
Death Jr. and the Science Fair of Doom	5.0	Konami	217	E10+
Dementium: The Ward	8.5	Gamecock	223	M
• Diddy Kong Racing DS	7.5	Nintendo	213	E
Diner Dash: Sizzle & Serve	6.5	Eidos	217	E
DK Jungle Climber	8.0	Nintendo	221	E
Draglade	7.5	Atlus	224	E10+
Dragon Ball Z: Harukanaru Densetsu	4.0	Atari	217	E
Dragon Quest Monsters: Joker	8.0	Square Enix	222	E10+
Drawn to Life	7.5	THQ	221	E
Dynasty Warriors DS: Fighter's Battle	7.5	Koei	219	E10+
Etrian Odyssey	7.0	Atlus	217	T
F-24 Stealth Fighter	3.5	Majesco	215	E10+
Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer	2.0	2K Games	218	E10+
FIFA 08	8.0	Electronic Arts	221	E
• Final Fantasy Fables: Chocobo Tales	7.0	Square Enix	216	E
Final Fantasy XII: Revenant Wings	7.5	Square Enix	223	E10+
Flipper Critters	4.5	Ignition Entertainment	218	E
Fossil League D.T.C.	N/A	D3PA	214	E
Freedom Wings	6.0	Natsume	207	E10+
Front Mission	6.5	Square Enix	222	E10+
Fullmetal Alchemist Trading Card Game	7.0	Destineer	219	T
Garfield Gets Real	N/A	Destination	223	E
Garfield's Nightmare	7.0	The Game Factory	220	E
• Geometry Wars: Galaxies	N/A	Sierra	222	E
Glory Days 2: Brotherhood of Men	6.0	Eidos	218	E10+
Godzilla Unleashed: Double Smash	3.0	Atari	224	E
The Golden Compass	N/A	Sega	223	E10+
Hannah Montana: Music Jam	N/A	Disney Interactive	223	E
Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix	7.0	Electronic Arts	218	E10+
• Heroes of Mana	6.5	Square Enix	219	E10+
Hoshigami Remix	6.0	Aksys Games	218	E
Hotel Dusk: Room 215	8.0	Nintendo	213	T
Impossible Mission	N/A	Codemasters	223	E
Indy 500 Legends	N/A	Destineer	224	E
Inuyasha: Secret of The Divine Jewel	6.0	Namco Bandai	213	E10+
Izuna: Legend of the Unemployed Ninja	6.5	Atlus	213	E10+
Kim Possible: Global Gemini	N/A	Buena Vista	214	E10+
Konami Classics Series: Arcade Hits	7.5	Konami	214	E10+
Left Brain, Right Brain	N/A	Majesco	224	E
• The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass	9.5	Nintendo	221	E
LEGO Star Wars: The Complete Saga	N/A	LucasArts	222	E
LifeSigns: Surgical Unit	N/A	Dreamcatcher	223	T
Looney Tunes: Duck Amuck	8.5	WB Games	221	E
Lost in Blue 2	5.0	Konami	215	E10+
• Luminous Arc	8.0	Atlus	219	T
Lunar Knights	8.0	Konami	213	E10+
Madden NFL 08	7.5	Electronic Arts	220	E
Mario Party DS	8.0	Nintendo	223	E
• Marvel Trading Card Game	4.0	Konami	213	T
Master of Illusion	N/A	Nintendo	223	E
Meet the Robinsons	N/A	Buena Vista	215	E10+
• Mega Man Star Force	7.5	Capcom	220	E
Mega Man ZX Advent	8.5	Capcom	222	E10+
Meteos: Disney Magic	7.5	Buena Vista	214	E
Monster Jam	N/A	Activision	223	E
MX vs. ATV Untamed	6.0	THQ	224	E
MySims	N/A	Electronic Arts	222	E
Namco Museum DS	8.0	Namco Bandai	221	E

RAYMAN RAVING RABBIDS 2

The Rabbids' animated antics are enough to warrant a look at Ubisoft's second Rayman Raving Rabbids effort for Wii. I agree with Steve's assertions in Vol. 223 that the minigame activities and controls are a mixed bag—some are brilliant while others quickly grow tedious. Even so, I'd tack on at least a full point to Steve's miserly 6.5 score based on the guffaws the game elicited. (Maybe, while reviewing the game, Steve had a bad hare day. It happens.) Personally, I'm hoping the Rabbids' next appearance is in a full-length movie. SCOTT P.

NiGHTS: JOURNEY OF DREAMS

Sega has done an amazing job recapturing NiGHTS's unique, whimsical magic. Ignore the jaded haters; games like Journey of Dreams are not to be missed.

—CHRIS H.

CSI: DARK MOTIVES

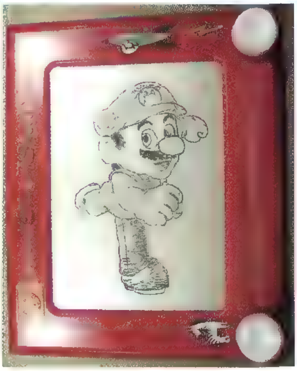
I'm a fan of both CSI and adventure games, and while Dark Motives for DS certainly isn't the best example of either—in fact, it's downright mediocre—there's something about it that makes me kind of like it. I think it's mainly because I just like the idea of old(ish) PC adventure games making their way to the DS. Are you paying attention, LucasArts? —JUSTIN C.

Naruto: Ninja Council 3	6.0	Tomy/D3PA	217	E10+
Naruto: Path of the Ninja	7.0	Tomy/D3PA	222	E10+
• Need For Speed ProStreet	N/A	Electronic Arts	223	E
Nervous Brickdown	7.0	Eidos	219	E
Ontamarama	7.0	Atlus	223	E
Operation: Vietnam	8.0	Majesco	220	T
Orcs & Elves	5.0	Electronic Arts	223	T
Panzer Tactics DS	N/A	Conspiracy	223	E10+
Pet Alien	8.0	The Game Factory	219	E
Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney Trials and Tribulations	8.5	Capcom	222	T
• Picross DS	8.0	Nintendo	219	E
Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End	7.0	Disney Interactive	217	E10+
• Planet Puzzle League	8.5	Nintendo	217	E
• Pogo Island	7.0	Electronic Arts	215	E
• Pokémon Diamond/Pearl	9.0	Nintendo	216	E
Prism: Light the Way	8.5	Eidos	219	E
Professional Fisherman's Tour: Northern Hemisphere	5.0	UFO Interactive	219	E
Puzzle de Harvest Moon	N/A	Natsume	223	E
Puzzle Quest: Challenge of the Warlords	4.0	D3PA	215	E10+
Quickspot	5.5	Namco Bandai	214	E10+
• Race Driver: Create & Race	7.5	Codemasters	219	T
Rafa Nadal Tennis	N/A	Codemasters	213	E
Rayman Raving Rabbids	7.0	Ubisoft	214	E
Rayman Raving Rabbids 2	N/A	Ubisoft	223	E10+
• Rune Factory: A Fantasy Harvest Moon	7.0	Natsume	219	E
The Settlers	5.0	Ubisoft	217	E
Shrek The Third	7.0	Activision	217	E
SimCity DS	8.0	Electronic Arts	218	E
The Simpsons Game	N/A	Electronic Arts	223	T
SNK Vs. Capcom Card Fighters DS	7.0	SNK Playmore	215	T
Sonic Rush Adventure	9.0	Sega	221	E
• Spectrobes	8.0	Buena Vista	214	E
Spider-Man 3	7.0	Activision	217	E10+
Steel Horizon	4.5	Konami	214	E10+
Strawberry Shortcake: 4 Seasons Cake	N/A	Jack of All Games	224	E
Theme Park	6.0	Electronic Arts	215	E
Thrillville: Off the Rails	N/A	LucasArts	222	E
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	8.5	Electronic Arts	221	E
Time Ace	6.5	Konami	216	E10+
TMNT	5.5	Ubisoft	214	E10+
Totally Spies! 2: Undercover	N/A	Atari	213	E10+
Touch Detective 2 ½	6.5	Atlus	221	E
Touch The Dead	5.5	Eidos	217	M
• TouchMaster	8.0	Midway	219	E
• Transformers: Autobots	6.0	Activision	219	E10+
• Transformers: Decepticons	6.0	Activision	219	E10+
Trioncube	5.5	Namco Bandai	213	E
Ultimate Mortal Kombat	N/A	Midway	223	M
• Warhammer 40,000: Squad Command	8.0	THQ	224	T
Wario: Master of Disguise	6.5	Nintendo	214	E10+
The Wild West	3.5	Majesco	220	E10+
• Winning Eleven Pro Evolution Soccer 2007	6.5	Konami	213	E
Wordjong	N/A	Destineer	224	E
Worms: Open Warfare 2	7.5	THQ	221	E10+
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2008	N/A	THQ	222	T
• Yu-Gi-Oh! GX Spirit Caller	N/A	Konami	213	E
• Yu-Gi-Oh! World Championship Tournament 2007	N/A	Konami	215	E
• Yu-Gi-Oh! World Championship Tournament 2008	N/A	Konami	224	E
GAME BOY ADVANCE				
Arthur and the Invisibles	N/A	Atari	213	E
Back to Stone	N/A	Graffiti Entertainment	214	E
Final Fantasy VI Advance	9.5	Nintendo	213	E10+
Foster's Home For Imaginary Friends	N/A	Crave Entertainment	213	E
Ghost Rider	N/A	2K Games	213	T
Mazes of Fate	N/A	Graffiti Entertainment	213	T
Meet the Robinsons	N/A	Buena Vista	215	E
Shrek Smash N' Crash Racing	N/A	Activision	213	E10+
TMNT	7.0	Ubisoft	214	E10+
Totally Spies! 2: Undercover	N/A	Atari	213	E10+

FANDOM

Art for Art's Sake

Sure, anyone can just play with an Etch A Sketch, but one man takes the popular toy—and Nintendo fandom—to the next level.



Like Trix, Etch A Sketches are for kids…right? Apparently not, as the appropriately named Etchasketchist (né Elliot Sharron) proves with each amazing picture on his site, etchasketchist.blogspot.com. Little is known about the Etch-A-Sketching savant, so we chatted with him about video games, his medium, and what he has in store for the future.
—JUSTIN C.

NINTENDO POWER: **How did you get so good at Etch A Sketching?**

THE ETCHASKETCHIST: Since I'm talking to Nintendo Power, I've got to give a shout out to Game Boy. A Game Boy Advance is about the same width as a Travel Etch A Sketch. The coordination it takes to simultaneously use both your left and right hands, your eyes, and your brain all comes from the time I put into Tetris, Zelda, Kirby, and Advance Wars on my Game Boy and GBA. I also started getting good at the Etch A Sketch in the back seat of long car rides. The Etch A Sketch was what I would pick up once my batteries died.

Why did you decide to make the Etch A Sketch your artistic medium of choice?

TE: A lot of reasons. It's cheap. You can find 'em at every thrift store and garage store in America. They're self contained. I've got a big problem with losing caps to pens and markers. They're clean. No ink to spill or eraser dust to brush away. And the process of drawing on an Etch A Sketch is fun. There's something magical about manipulating the stylus with two stationary knobs. And when you get in the zone, and you're using both hands and both sides of your brain simultaneously, it feels good. Your neurons are firing in ways they don't normally. I think Etch-A-Sketching might be making me smarter, but I haven't been able to prove it yet. Also the whole drawing, painting, and sculpting fields are pretty well populated and have long histories. There are only a handful of us Etch-A-Sketchers out there, and there's still a lot of unexplored artistic territory.

How long did it take you to draw the Mario piece?

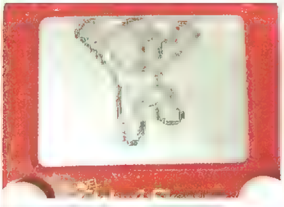
TE: About an hour. That's the average for a standard-sized Etch A Sketch. I usually break it up into 20-to-30-minute sessions.

Do you save all of your art, or do you sell any of it?

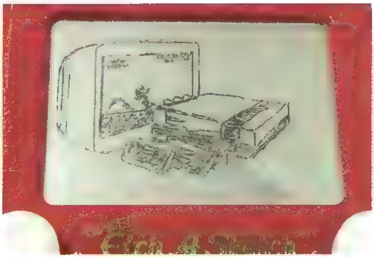
TE: Every piece gets shaken up and erased. I sold two preserved sketches this year, and I'm in no hurry to do any more. It's kind of a hassle, and I don't feel good when I'm stabbing the Etch A Sketch and draining its sand. I don't mind the fact that the pieces disappear after a day. Thanks to digital photography, I can still look back and remember how cool they were. But even though I don't like to sell them, I will gladly trade a custom piece or two for a Wii or a DS if anybody's got any extras sitting around.

Do you have any plans to draw any other Nintendo characters in the future?

TE: Well, I've obviously got to do Link and Samus at some point. Bowser is on the list. Donkey Kong perhaps. Maybe even Miyamoto himself. But if I had to guess I would say Fred Savage rockin' a Power Glove from *The Wizard* will probably be the next Nintendo-related piece you'll see.



The Etchasketchist says he chooses his subjects based on how "awesome" they are.

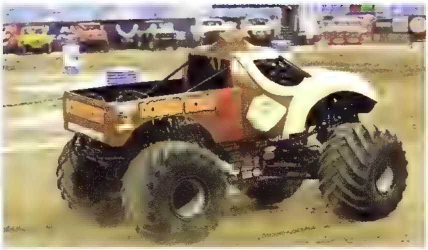


EVENTS

Donkey Kong Smash!

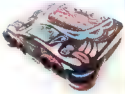
Donkey Kong has been around since 1981, and Nintendo decided to celebrate the big ape's success by introducing him to the world of... Monster Jam? In a recent show in Minneapolis, fans were able to see the debut of the new DK truck, which burst forth from a giant barrel to lay the smack down on the competition. Driver Frank Krmel is a big fan of the series, and although we're not sure we'd agree with him when he said that Monster Jam was "the next natural progression" for DK, we have to admit that he cuts a striking figure in that DK suit. The Donkey Kong truck will be a part of Monster Jam for the foreseeable future, so if you're a fan of monster trucks, or just really love monkeys in ties, be sure to check it out. —TOM H.

Donkey Kong monster truck driver Frank Krmel gives a new meaning to the term "monkey suit."



MOD JOB

Nin-totem 64



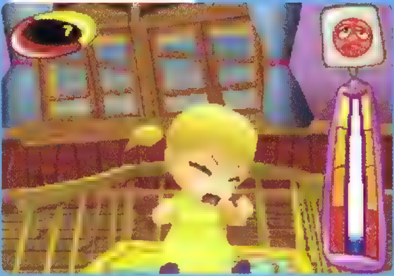
People might be all about the Wii and DS right now, but we still love our old systems—I especially have a fondness for the good old Nintendo 64. Apparently, so does one of Los Angeles-based artist Ryan Crippen's clients, who asked for this custom-painted console. Crippen says on his site, "Most of the time I incorporate my Spade-Skull logo into the design, or I go for the Haida/NW Indian/Totem look." As you can see, his style is a perfect fit for the N64. You can see more of Crippen's art at his website, http://reactor88.blogspot.com. —JUSTIN C.

WRITE YOUR OWN CAPTION

Screen Test

[illegible]

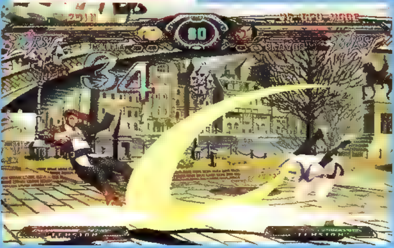
THIS MONTH'S SHOT



[illegible]

HERE'S OUR CAPTION.
Think you can do better?

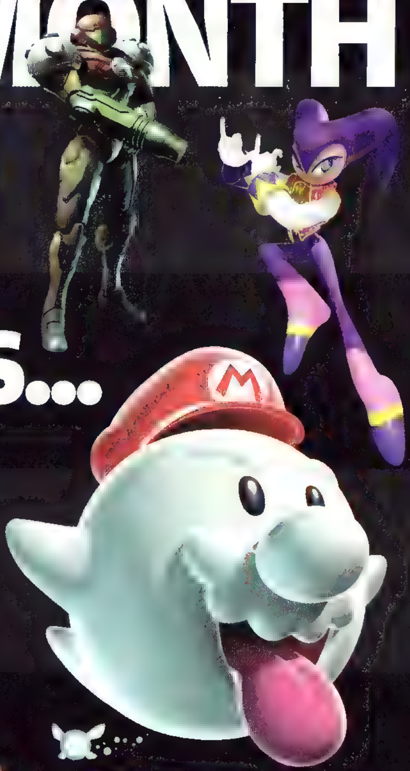
VOLUME 223'S SHOT



[illegible]

March 2008 Vol. 226

NEXT MONTH



The winter frost is over, melting away to reveal only the freshest awards, reviews, previews, and a whole lot more.

AND THE WINNER IS...

Readers voted. Editors fought. When the dust had settled, only the best games were left standing. Find out which titles took home top honors in the 2007 Nintendo Power Awards!

EARLY BUZZ

2008 is kicking off with a bang, and we've got the definitive word on heavy hitters such as No More Heroes, Dragon Quest Swords, and Apollo Justice: Ace Attorney in next month's reviews.

AN EPIC UNFOLDS

Next month's cover story is an RPG so fantastic, so engrossing, so epic, and so hush-hush that we'd have to erase your memories if we told you what it is. In fact, maybe we already did. Role-playing fans, get ready for a big one.

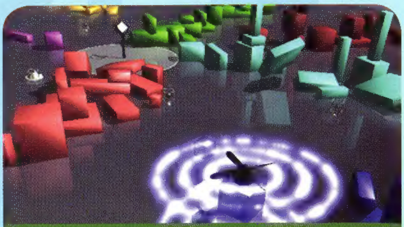
Nintendo Power (ISSN 1041-9551) is published 13 times a year (monthly, except semi-monthly in September) by Future US, Inc., 4000 Shoreline Court, Suite 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. Application to mail at Periodicals Postage Rates is pending at South San Francisco, CA and additional mailing offices. Subscriptions: One year basic rate (12 issues): US: $24.95; Canada $29.95. Canadian orders must be prepaid in US funds only. Canadian price includes postage and GST (GST# R128220688). Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement #40043631. Returns: 4960-2 Walker Road, Windsor, ON N9A 6J3. For customer service write to: Nintendo Power Customer Care, PO Box 5770, Harlan, IA 51593-1270, or call: 1(866) 941-8368 in the US. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Nintendo Power, P.O. Box 5770, Harlan, IA 51593-1270. Entire contents copyright 2007, Future US, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or part is prohibited. Produced and printed in the United States.

FROM THE LEADER IN GAME DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

GET THE ULTIMATE SUMMER EXPERIENCE

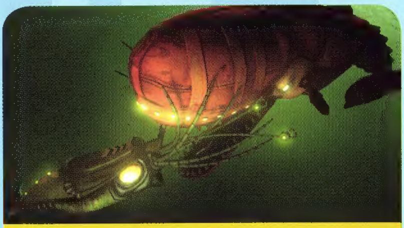
DIGIPEN ProjectFUN WORKSHOPS

DigiPen Institute of Technology, recognized by the industry as a premier game development college, presents a two-week summer workshop series designed to introduce participants of all experience levels to the fundamentals of *game programming, 3D computer animation* and *robotics.*



Game Programming

- **Get an opportunity to tour portions of Nintendo of America**
- **Awesome after-school activites with game tournaments and guest industry speakers**
- **Explore the Developers Gallery where many local game companies will be showcased**



3D Animation

Find out more or sign-up for an online information session at

WORKSHOPS.DIGIPEN.EDU

Robotics

DIGIPEN
INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

5001 150th Ave NE, Redmond, WA 98052
(866) 478-5236 • ***www.digipen.edu***

OFFICIAL VIDEO GAME

Beijing 2008

THE COMPETITION HEATS UP WITH NEW EVENTS ON THE DS™!

MARIO & SONIC AT THE OLYMPIC GAMES™

AVAILABLE NOW!

UNIQUE TOUCH SCREEN GAMEPLAY FOR 1-4 PLAYERS

24 EVENTS INCLUDING 8 EXCLUSIVES LIKE CYCLING AND DREAM CANOEING

16 PLAYABLE CHARACTERS FROM THE WORLDS OF MARIO AND SONIC

www.sega.com/mariosonic

EVERYONE E Mild Cartoon Violence ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

ALSO AVAILABLE ON Wii

NINTENDO DS™

Published by SEGA® www.sega.com

TM IOC/36USC220506. Copyright © 2008 International Olympic Committee ("IOC"). All rights reserved. SUPER MARIO characters © NINTENDO. SONIC THE HEDGEHOG characters © SEGA. All Rights Reserved. Sega is registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. SEGA, the SEGA logo and Sonic The Hedgehog are either registered trademarks or trademarks of SEGA Corporation. The Nintendo DS and the Wii logos are trademarks of Nintendo. ©2006 Nintendo.

SONIC RIDERS
ZERO GRAVITY™
WWW.SONICRIDERSZG.COM
EVERYONE
E
Cartoon Violence
ESRB CONTENT RATING
www.esrb.org
PlayStation®2
Wii™
nintendo Wi-Fi connection
SONIC TEAM™
SEGA®
www.sega.com

© SEGA. SEGA is registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. SEGA, the SEGA logo, the SONIC TEAM logo and SONIC RIDERS: ZERO GRAVITY are either trademarks or registered trademarks of SEGA Corporation. All rights reserved.
"PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Wii and the Wii logo are trademarks of Nintendo. © 2006 Nintendo.

SONIC
RIDERS
ZERO GRAVITY
™